EPHEMERA CRITICA

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OR PLAIN TRUTHS ABOUT CURRENT LITERATURE

BY JOHN CHURTON COLLINS

Non verebor nominare singulos, quo facilius, propositis exemplis, appareat, quibus gradibus fracta sit et deminuta eloquentia.

—*Dial. de Orat.*

αἰνέων αἰνητά, μομφὰν δ' ἐπισπείρων ἀλιτροῖς

—*Pindar*

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PREFACE

IT is time for some one to speak out. When we compare the condition and prospects of Science in all its branches, its organization, its standards, its aims, its representatives with those of Literature, how deplorable and how humiliating is the contrast! In the one we see an ordered realm, in the other mere chaos. The one, serious, strenuous, progressive, is displaying an energy as wonderful in what it has accomplished as in what it promises to accomplish; the other, without soul, without conscience, without nerve, aimless, listless and decadent, appears to be stagnating, almost entirely, into the monopoly of those who are bent on futilizing and degrading it.

Science stands where it does, not simply by virtue of the genius, the industry, the example of its most distinguished representatives, but because by those representatives the whole sphere of its activity is being directed and controlled. The care of the Universities, the care of learned societies, the care of devoted enthusiasts, its interests and honour are watchfully and jealously

guarded. The qualifications of its teachers are guaranteed by tests prescribed by the highest authorities on the subjects professed. To standards fixed and maintained by those authorities is referred every serious contribution to its literature. Even a popular lecturer, or a popular writer, who undertook to be its exponent would be exploded at once if he displayed ignorance and incompetence. Such, indeed, is the solidarity of its energies that it is rather in the degrees and phases of their manifestation than in their essence and characteristics that they vary. There is not a scientific institution in England the regulations and aims of which do not bear the impress of such masters as Huxley and Tyndall and their disciples; not a work issuing from the scientific Press which is not a proof of the influence which such men have exercised and are exercising, and of the high standard exacted and attained wherever Science is taught and interpreted.

It is far otherwise with Literature. Those who represent it, in a sense analogous to that in which the men who have been referred to represent Science, have neither voice nor influence in its organization, as a subject of instruction, at the centres of education. They neither give it the ply, nor in any way affect its standards and its character in practice and production. As examples few follow them, as counsellors no one heeds them. They constitute

what is little more than an esoteric body, moving in a sphere of its own.

And yet there is no reason at all why there should not be the same solidarity in the activity of Literature as there is in the activity of Science, and why the standard of aim and attainment in the one should not be as high as in the other. But this can never be accomplished until certain radical reforms are instituted, and the first step towards reform is to demonstrate the necessity for it. I have done so here. I have drawn attention to the state of things in our Universities, —in other words, to what I must take leave to call the scandalous and incredible indifference of the Councils of those Universities to the appeals which have, during the last fifteen years, been made to them to place the study of Literature, in the proper sense of the term, upon the footing on which they have placed other studies. I have pointed out what have been, and what must continue to be, the effects of that indifference. I have given specimens of the books to which the Universities are not ashamed to affix their *imprimatur*, and I have shown that, so far from them considering even their reputation involved in such a matter, they do not scruple to circulate works teeming with blunders and absurdities of the grossest kind, blunders and absurdities to which their attention has been publicly called over and over again. I have given specimens of the kind of works which the occupants of

distinguished Chairs of Literature can, with perfect impunity, address to students; and I would ask any scientific man what would be thought of a Professor, say, of the Royal Naval College, or of the City and Guilds of London Institute, who should put his name to analogous publications—to publications, that is to say, as unsound in their theories, as inaccurate in their facts, as slovenly and perfunctory in general execution, as those to which I have here directed attention? If such things are done in the green tree, what is likely to be done in the dry? or, as Chaucer puts it, "if gold ruste, what schal yren doo?" That is one of the questions on which these essays may, perhaps, throw some light.

To be misrepresented and misunderstood is the certain fate of a book like this, and I am well aware of the responsibilities incurred in undertaking it. It is very distasteful to me to give pain or cause annoyance to any one, and, whether I am believed or not, I can say, with strict truth, that I have not the smallest personal bias against any of those whom I have censured most severely. I believe, for the reasons already explained, that Belles Lettres are sinking deeper and deeper into degradation, that they are gradually passing out of the hands of their true representatives, and becoming almost the monopoly of their false representatives, and that the consequence of this cannot but be most disastrous to us as a nation, to our reputation

in the World of Letters, to taste, to tone, to morals. It is surely a shame and a crime in any one, and more especially in men occupying positions of influence and authority, to assist in the work of corruption, either by deliberately writing bad books or by conniving, as critics, at the production of bad books; and I am very sure it has become a duty, and an imperative duty, to expose and denounce them.

These essays are partly a protest and partly an experiment. As a protest they explain, and, I hope, justify themselves; as an experiment they are an attempt to illustrate what we should be fortunate if we could see more frequently illustrated by abler hands. They are a series of studies in serious, patient, and absolutely impartial criticism, having for its object a comprehensive survey of the vices and defects, as well as of the merits, characteristic of current Belles Lettres. I do not suppose that anything I have said will have the smallest effect on the present generation, but on the rising generation I believe that much which has been said will not be thrown away. In any case, what I was constrained to write I have written. And it is my last word in a long controversy.

It remains to add that most of these essays appeared originally in the *Saturday Review*, and I desire to express my thanks to the late and present Editors, not merely for permission to reproduce the essays, but for much kindness besides.

Three appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and one, the first essay on "English Literature at the Universities," in the *Nineteenth Century*; and my thanks are due to the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and to Mr. Knowles. But all of them have been carefully revised and greatly enlarged, in some cases to more than double their original form. The introductory essay is, with the exception of the opening pages, in which I have drawn on an old article of mine in the *Quarterly Review*, quite new; and, indeed, that may be said of a great part of the volume.

NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I REGRET to find that I have done M. Jasserand grave injustice in censuring him for being ignorant of the existence of the *Speculum Meditantis*, the MS. of which was identified after the publication of his work.

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THE PRESENT FUNCTIONS OF CRITICISM

IT may sound paradoxical to say that the more widely education spreads, the more generally intelligent a nation becomes, the greater is the danger to which Art and Letters are exposed. And yet how obviously is this the case, and how easily is this explained. The quality of skilled work depends mainly on the standard required of the workman. If his judges and patrons belong to the discerning few who, knowing what is excellent, are intolerant of everything which falls short of excellence, the standard required will necessarily be a high one, and the standard required will be the standard attained. In past times, for example, the only men of letters who were respected formed a portion of that highly cultivated class who will always be in the minority; and to that class, and to that class only, they appealed. A community within a community, they regarded the general public with as much indifference as the general public regarded them, and wrote only for themselves, and for those who stood on the same intellectual level as themselves. It was

so in the Athens of Pericles; it was so in the Rome of Augustus; it was so in the Florence of the Medici; and a striking example of the same thing is to be found in our own Elizabethan Dramatists. Though their bread depended on the brutal and illiterate savages for whose amusement they catered, they still talked the language of scholars and poets, and forced their rude hearers to sit out works which could have been intelligible only to scholars and poets. Each felt with pride that he belonged to a great guild, which neither had, nor affected to have, anything in common with the multitude. Each strove only for the applause of those whose praise is not lightly given. Each spurred the other on. When Marlowe worked, he worked with the fear of Greene before his eyes, as Shakespeare was put on his mettle by Jonson, and Jonson by Shakespeare. We owe *Hamlet* and *Sejanus*, *Much Ado about Nothing* and the *Alchemist*, not to men who bid only for the suffrage of the mob, but to men who stood in awe of the verdict which would be passed on them by the company assembled at the Mermaid and the Devil.

As long as men of letters continue to form an intellectual aristocracy, and, stimulated by mutual rivalry, strain every nerve to excel, and as long also as they have no temptation to pander to the crowd, so long will Literature maintain its dignity, and so long will the stan-

dard attained in Literature be a high one. In the days of Dryden and Pope, in the days even of Johnson and Gibbon, the greater part of the general public either read nothing, or read nothing but politics and sermons. The few who were interested in Poetry, in Criticism, in History, were, as a rule, those who had received a learned education, men of highly cultivated tastes and of considerable attainments. A writer, therefore, who aspired to contribute to polite literature, had to choose between finding no readers at all, and finding such readers as he was bound to respect—between instant oblivion, and satisfying a class which, composed of scholars, would have turned with contempt from writings unworthy of scholars. A classical style, a refined tone, and an adequate acquaintance with the chief authors of Ancient Rome and of Modern France, were requisites, without which even a periodical essayist would have had small hope of obtaining a hearing. Whoever will turn, we do not say to the papers of Addison and his circle in the early part of the last century, or to those of Chesterfield and his circle later on, but to the average critical work of Cave's and Dodsley's hack writers, cannot fail to be struck with its remarkable merit in point of literary execution.

But as education spreads, a very different class of readers call into being a very different class of writers. Men and women begin to seek

in books the amusement or excitement which they sought formerly in social dissipation. To the old public of scholars succeeds a public, in which every section of society has its representatives, and to provide this vast body with the sort of reading which is acceptable to it, becomes a thriving and lucrative calling. An immense literature springs up, which has no other object than to catch the popular ear, and no higher aim than to please for the moment. That perpetual craving for novelty, which has in all ages been characteristic of the multitude, necessitates in authors of this class a corresponding rapidity of production. The writer of a single good book is soon forgotten by his contemporaries; but the writer of a series of bad books is sure of reputation and emolument. Indeed, a good book and a bad book stand, so far as the general public is concerned, on precisely the same level, as they meet with precisely the same fate. Each presents the attraction of a new title-page. Each is glanced through, and tossed aside. Each is estimated not by its intrinsic worth, but according to the skill with which it has been puffed. Till within comparatively recent times this literature was, for the most part, represented by novels and poems, and by those light and desultory essays, sketches and *ana*, which are the staple commodity of our magazines. And so long as it confined itself within these bounds it did no

mischief, and even some good. Flimsy and superficial though it was, it had at least the merit of interesting thousands in Art and Letters, who would otherwise have been indifferent to them. It afforded nutriment to minds which would have rejected more solid fare. To men of business and pleasure who, though no longer students, still retained the tincture of early culture, it offered the most agreeable of all methods of killing time, while scholars found in it welcome relaxation from severer studies. It thus supplied a want. Presenting attractions not to one class only, but to all classes, it grew on the world. Its patrons, who half a century ago numbered thousands, now number millions.

And as it has grown in favour, it has grown in ambition. It is no longer satisfied with the humble province which it once held, but is extending its dominion in all directions. It has its representatives in every department of Art and Letters. It has its poets, its critics, its philosophers, its historians. It crowds not our club-tables and news-stalls only, but our libraries. Thus what was originally a mere excrescence on literature, in the proper sense of the term, has now assumed proportions so gigantic, that it has not merely overshadowed that literature, but threatens to supersede it.

No thoughtful man can contemplate the present condition of current literature without disgust and alarm. We have still, indeed,

lingering among us a few masters whose works would have been an honour to any age; and here and there among writers may be discerned men who are honourably distinguished by a conscientious desire to excel, men who respect themselves, and respect their calling. But to say that these are in the minority, would be to give a very imperfect idea of the proportion which their numbers bear to those who figure most prominently before the public. They are, in truth, as tens are to myriads. Their comparative insignificance is such, that they are powerless even to leaven the mass. The position which they would have occupied half a century ago, and which they may possibly occupy half a century hence, is now usurped by a herd of scribblers who have succeeded, partly by sheer force of numbers, and partly by judicious co-operation, in all but dominating literature. Scarcely a day passes in which some book is not hurried into the world, which owes its existence not to any desire on the part of its author to add to the stores of useful literature, or even to a hope of obtaining money, but simply to that paltry vanity which thrives on the sort of homage of which society of a certain kind is not grudging, and which knows no distinction between notoriety and fame. A few years ago a man who contributed articles to a current periodical, or who delivered a course of lectures, had, as a rule, the good sense to know

that when they had fulfilled the purpose for which they were originally intended, the world had no more concern with them, and he would as soon have thought of inflicting them in the shape of a volume on the public, as he would have thought of issuing an edition of his private letters to his friends. Now all is changed. The first article in the creed of a person who has figured in either of these capacities, appears to be, that he is bound to force himself into notice in the character of an author. And this, happily for himself, but unhappily for the interests of literature, he is able to do with perfect facility and with perfect impunity. Books are speedily manufactured and as speedily reduced to pulp. A worthless book may be as easily invested with those superficial attractions which catch the eye of the crowd as a meritorious one. As the general public are the willing dupes of puffers, it is no more difficult to palm off on them the spurious wares of literary charlatans, than it is to beguile them into purchasing the wares of any other kind of charlatan. No one is interested in telling them the truth. Many, on the contrary, are interested in deceiving them. As a rule, the men who write bad books are the men who criticise bad books; and as they know that what they mete out in their capacity of judges to-day is what will in turn be meted out to them in their capacity of authors to-morrow, it is not surprising that

the relations between them should be similar to those which Tacitus tells us existed between Vinius and Tigellinus—"nulla innocentiæ cura, sed vices impunitatis."

Meanwhile all those vile arts which were formerly confined to the circulators of bad novels and bad poems are practised without shame. It is shocking, it is disgusting to contemplate the devices to which many men of letters will stoop for the sake of exalting themselves into a factitious reputation. They will form cliques for the purpose of mutual puffery. They will descend to the basest methods of self-advertisement. And the evil is fast-spreading. Indeed, things have come to such a pass, that persons of real merit, if they have the misfortune to depend on their pens for a livelihood, must either submit to be elbowed and jostled out of the field, or take part in the same ignoble scramble for notoriety, and the same detestable system of mutual puffery. Thus everything which formerly tended to raise the standard of literary ambition and literary attainment has given place to everything which tends to degrade it. The multitude now stand where the scholar once stood. From the multitude emanate, to the multitude are addressed two-thirds of the publications which pour forth, every year, from our presses.

> Viviamo scorti
> Da mediocrità: sceso il sapiente,

OF CRITICISM

> E salita è la turba a un sol confine
> Che il mondo agguaglia.

Matthew Arnold very truly observed, that one of the most unfortunate tendencies of our time was the tendency to over-estimate the performances of "the average man." The over-estimation of these performances is no longer a tendency, but an established custom. Literature, in all its branches, is rapidly becoming his monopoly. As judged and judge, as author and critic, there is every indication that he will proceed from triumph to triumph, and establish his cult wherever books are read. Now the only sphere in which "the average man" is entitled to homage is a moral one, and he is most venerable when he is passive and unambitious. But if ambition and the love of fame are awakened in him, he is capable of becoming exceedingly corrupt and of forfeiting every title to veneration. He is capable of resorting to all the devices to which men are forced to resort in manufacturing factitious reputations, to imposture, to fraud, to circulating false currencies of his own, and to assisting others in the circulation of theirs. Even when he is free from these vices, so far as their deliberate practice is concerned, he is scarcely less mischievous, if he be uncontrolled. To say that his standard is never likely to be a high one, either with reference to his own achievements or with reference to what he exacts from others, and to say that the

systematic substitution of inferior standards for high ones must affect literature and all that is involved in its influence, most disastrously, is to say what will be generally acknowledged. And he has everything, unhappily, in his favour —numbers, influence, the spirit of the age. For one who sees through him and takes his measure, there are thousands who do not: for one who could discern the justice of an exposure of his shortcomings, there are thousands who would attribute that exposure to personal enmity and to dishonest motives. His power, indeed, is becoming almost irresistible. The one thing which he and his fellows thoroughly understand is the formidable advantage of co-operation. The consequence is that there are probably not half a dozen reviews and newspapers now left which they are not able practically to coerce. An editor is obliged to assume honesty in those who contribute to his columns, and also to avail himself of the services of men who can write good articles, if they write bad books. In the first case, it is not open to him to question the justice of the verdict pronounced; in the second case, the courtesy of the gentleman very naturally and properly predominates, under such circumstances, over public considerations—and how can truth be told? Nor is this all. Assuming that an editor is free from such ties, he has to consult the interests of his paper, to study

popularity, and not to estrange those who are, from a commercial point of view, the mainstays of all our literary journals, those who advertise in them,—the publishers. "If," said an editor to me once, "I were to tell the truth, as forcibly as I could wish to do, about the books sent to me for review, in six months my proprietors would be in the bankruptcy court." It is in the power of the publishers to ruin any literary journal. There is probably not a single Review in London which would survive the withdrawal of the publishers' advertisements.

A more honourable class of men than those who form the majority of the London publishers does not exist, nor have the interests of Literature, as distinguished from commercial interests, ever found heartier and more ungrudging support, than they have long found in three or four of the leading firms, and as they are now finding in two or three of the firms which have been more recently established. But, unhappily, this is not everywhere the case. While the firms, to which I have referred, have never, in any way, attempted to interfere with the independence of reviewers, others have made no secret of their intention to make their patronage in advertisement dependent on favourable notices of their publications. The strain of temptation and peril to which editors are thus exposed may be estimated by the fact that, a flattering review may, if sup-

plemented by similar ones, put some three hundred a year into the pockets of their proprietors, while severity and justice would involve a corresponding loss. It need hardly be said that no editor of a respectable review would allow any definite understanding of this kind to exist, or that any publisher would ever dare to suggest it, but there can be no doubt that such considerations have to be taken into account almost universally, and place serious restraint on freedom of judgment.

There is, it is true, another aspect of this question. Publishers must protect themselves. Though reviews offend much more frequently on the side of dishonest and interested puffery, they are very often made the vehicles of equally unscrupulous rancour and spite. If they do their readers injustice, by attempting to foist bad books on them, they do every one concerned injustice, by damning good ones. No one could blame a publisher for declining to support a paper which was continually making his books the subjects of unmerited attacks. But a publisher who attempts to prevent the truth from being told, and so secures, or seeks to secure, currency for his spurious wares, is guilty of an act which borders closely on fraud.

Another circumstance very favourable to the encouragement of inferiority, and not of inferiority only, but of charlatanism and imposture, is the increasing tendency to regard

nothing of importance compared with the spirit of tolerance and charity. An all-embracing philanthropy exempts nothing from its protection. Every one must be good-natured. Severity, we are told, is quite out of fashion. Such censors as the old reviewers are now mere anachronisms. It is vain to plead that tolerance and charity must discriminate; that, like other virtues, they may be abused, and that in their abuse they may become immoral; that there are higher considerations than the feelings of individuals; and that, if to give pain or annoyance admits of no justification but necessity, necessity may exact their infliction as an exigent duty.

But this spirit of tolerance and charity has also become attenuated into the spirit of mere *laissez-faire.* We have no lack of real scholars and of real critics, who see through the whole thing, and probably deplore it; but they make no sign, look on with a sort of amused perplexity, and do their own work, thankful, no doubt, sometimes, when it is oppressive, that they need not be over-scrupulous about its quality. If, occasionally, they get a little impatient and indulge their genius, protest goes no further than sarcasm and irony, so fine that it is intelligible only among themselves; while the objects of their satire, as well as the general public, missing the one and misinterpreting the other, take it all for applause. Resistance, it is said, is useless. Literature is a trade. What

has come was inevitable: *vive la bagatelle,* and drift with the stream.

And now let us consider what are the results of all this. The first and most important is the degradation of criticism. Criticism is to Literature what legislation and government are to States. If they are in able and honest hands all goes well; if they are in weak and dishonest hands all is anarchy and mischief. And as government in a Republic, the true analogy to the sphere of which we are speaking, is represented not by those who form the minority in its councils, but by those who form the majority, so in criticism, it is not on the few but on the many among those who represent it, that its authority and influence depend. And what are its characteristics in the hands of its prevailing majority—in the hands of those who are its legislators in a realm co-extensive with the reading world? It is not criticism at all. To criticism, in the true sense of the term, it has no claim even to approximation. It seems to have resolved itself into something which wants a name,— something which is partly dithyramb and partly rhetoric. Without standards, without touchstones, without principles, without knowledge, it appears to be regarded as the one calling for which no equipment and no training are needed. What a master of the art has called the final fruit of careful discipline and of much experience is assumed to come spontaneously. A

man of literary tastes is born cultured. A critic, like a poet, is the pure product of nature. Such canons as these "critics" have are the mysterious and somewhat perplexing evolutions of their own inner consciousness, or derived, not from the study of classical writers in English or in any other language, of all of whom they are probably profoundly ignorant, but from a current acquaintance with the writings of contemporaries, who are, in intelligence and performance, a little in advance of themselves. But what they lack in attainments they make up in impudence. The effrontery of some of these "critics," whose verdicts, ludicrous to relate, are daily recorded as "opinions of the Press," literally exceeds belief. They will sit in judgment on books written in languages of whose very alphabets they are ignorant. They will pose as authorities and pronounce *ex cathedrâ* on subjects literary, historical, and scientific of which they know nothing more than what they have contrived to pick up from the works which they are "reviewing." Their estimates of the books, on the merits and demerits of which they undertake to enlighten the public, correspond with their qualifications for forming them. Books displaying in their writers the grossest ignorance of the very rudiments of the subjects treated, and literally swarming with blunders and absurdities, all of which pass undetected and unnoticed, are made

the subjects of elaborate panegyrics, which would need some qualification if applied to the very classics in the subjects under discussion. Books, on the other hand, of unusual and distinguished merit are despatched summarily in a few lines of equally undeserved depreciation; books written in the worst taste and in the vilest style are pronounced to be models of both. Sobriety, measure, and discrimination have no place either in the creed or in the practice of these writers. They think in superlatives; they express themselves in superlatives. It never seems to occur to them that if criticism has to reckon with Mr. Le Gallienne it has also to reckon with Shakespeare; that if it has to take the measure of Mr. Hall Caine, it has likewise to take the measure of Cervantes and Fielding, and that of some dozen prose writers and poets, it cannot be pronounced, at the same time of each, that he is "the greatest living master of English prose," or "without parallel for his superlative command of all the resources of rhythmical expression." There is one accomplishment in which these critics are particularly adroit, and that is in keeping out of controversy, and so avoiding all chance of being called to account. For this reason they deal more in eulogy than in censure, for the public is less likely to complain of a bad book being foisted on them for a good one, than its irate author to sit silent under reproof.

If we go a little higher, things are almost as bad, if not quite so ridiculous. In everything but in criticism it is necessary to specialize. A man who posed as an authority on all the literatures of the world, and on the history of every nation in the world, would be very justly set down as an impostor. And yet pretentions which men would be the first to ridicule, as private individuals, they do not scruple to claim, as critics. An historical student enriches History with a volume throwing new and important light on some obscure episode or period; a classical student deserves the gratitude of scholars for an invaluable monograph; English Literature or one of the Continental Literatures is illustrated by a series of dissertations as instructive as they are original; or a truly memorable contribution has been made to political philosophy, to æsthetics, or to ethics. What is their fate? It is by no means improbable that they will be 'reviewed,' in the course of a few days, by the same man for three or four, or it may be for five or six, daily and weekly journals, and their fortune in the market made or marred by a censor who has probably done no more than glance at their half-cut pages, and who, if he had studied them from end to end, would have been no more competent to take their measure than he would have been to write them. This leads, it is needless to say, to every kind of abuse: to works which deserve to be authorities on the subjects of which they treat

dropping at once into oblivion, to works which every scholar knows to be below contempt usurping their places ; to the deprivation of all stimulus to honourable exertion on the part of authors of ability and industry; to the encouragement of charlatans and fribbles; to gross impositions on the public. A very amusing and edifying record might be compiled partly out of a selection of the various verdicts passed contemporaneously by reviews on particular works, and partly out of comparisons of the subsequent fortunes of works with their fortunes while submitted to this censorship.

But it is not these causes only which contribute to the degradation of criticism. A very important factor is the prevalence, or rather the predominance, of mere prejudice, the prejudice of cliques in favour of cliques, the prejudice of cliques against cliques, the prejudice of the veteran against or in favour of the novice, the subsequent compensation, in corresponding prejudice on the part of the novice, when his novitiate is over. The two things which never seem to be considered are the interests of Literature and the interests of the public. The appearance of a work by the member of a particular coterie is the signal, on the one hand, for a series of preposterously intemperate eulogies, and for a series, on the other hand, of equally intemperate depreciations, in such organs as are accessible to both parties. If a work, with any pretension to

originality, by a previously unknown author makes its appearance, it is pretty sure to fare in one of three ways: it will scarcely be noticed at all; it will be made the theme of a philippic against innovating eccentricities and new-fangled notions; or it will fall into the hands of a critic who is on the look-out for a "discovery." Its fortune, so far as notoriety is concerned, will, in that case, be made. The critic, thus on his mettle and with his character for discernment at stake, will not only become proportionately vociferous but will rally his equally vociferous partisans. Hyperbole will be heaped on hyperbole, rodomontade on rodomontade, till real merit will be made ridiculous, and the unhappy author awake at last, to assume his true proportions, in a Fool's Paradise.

And to this pass has criticism come, and Literature generally, in almost all its branches, is necessarily following suit. It would be no exaggeration to say, that the sole encouragement now left to authors to produce good books is the satisfaction of their own conscience, and the approbation of a few discerning judges; and this attained, they must starve if their bread depends upon their pen. It is not that a good book will not be praised, but that bad books are praised still more; it is not that it will fail to find fair and competent reviewers, but that for one fair and competent reviewer it will find fifty who are unfair and incompetent. It is on

its acceptance, not with the few who can estimate its merits, but with the many who take that estimate on trust from judges, whose competence or incompetence they are equally unable to gauge, that the possibility of a book yielding any return to its author depends. The public neither can nor will distinguish. A book which has two or three favourable press notices which are merited cannot stand against a book having twenty or thirty which are unmerited. Nor is this all. Measured and discriminating eulogy, which means precisely what it expresses, and which is always the note of sound and just criticism, is to the uninitiated poor recommendation compared with that which has no limitation but extremes. How can the still small voice of truth expect to get a hearing amid a bellowing Babel of its undistinguishable mimic? What inducement has an author to aim at excellence, to spend three or four years on a monograph or a history that it may be sold for waste paper, when some miserable compilation, vamped up in as many weeks, will, with a little management, give him notoriety and fill his purse? There is not a scholar, not a discerning reader in England who will not bear me witness when I say that, as a rule, the best books produced in Belles Lettres are those of which the general public knows nothing, and that he has been guided to them sometimes by pure accident, and sometimes, it may be, by a depreciatory notice or curt

paragraph in "our library table" limbo. And what does this mean? It means that a writer has discovered that it is impossible for him to have a conscience, or aim at an honourable reputation, unless he can afford to lose money. It means more; it means that publishers are obliged to discourage the production of solid and scholarly works. It is notorious that the Delegates of the Clarendon Press at Oxford, and one or two firms in London, having regard to the honourable traditions of their predecessors, have wished to maintain those traditions by encouraging the production of such works, and have, at a great pecuniary loss, persevered in this ambition. But no publisher can continue to multiply books which do not pay their expenses, and whose sale begins and ends in the remainder market.

This state of things is the more deplorable when we consider its effect, not merely in degrading and corrupting Literature on its productive side, but in detracting so seriously from its efficacy on its influential side. During the last few years the rapid spread of higher education, the popularization of liberal culture through such agencies as the University Extension Lectures, the National Home Reading Union and similar institutions have called into being an immense and constantly multiplying class of serious readers and students. These already number tens of thousands, they will

before long number hundreds of thousands. Now it is of the utmost importance that these readers, who are quite prepared to appreciate what is excellent, should be guided to what is excellent, and discouraged in every way from conversing with what is bad and inferior in Literature. But how is this to be done when those who are striving, in every way, to raise the standard of popular taste and of popular culture, as teachers, find all their efforts counteracted by the intense activity of those who are doing their utmost to degrade both, as writers. It is only those engaged in education, and more particularly in popular education, who can understand the extent of the mischief which bookmakers and the puffers of bookmakers are doing, who can understand the tone, the taste, the temper induced by the habitual and exclusive perusal of the writings characteristic of these pests,—the inaccuracies and errors, the misrepresentations and absurdities, to which these writings give currency.

In the days of our forefathers, a reader of literary tastes, if he wished to acquaint himself with an English classic, went to the fountain head and read Spenser or Milton, Pope or Addison for himself. If he desired to know what criticism had said about them, he had criticism of authority at hand, and he consulted it. In our day it is about an even chance whether the ordinary reader would

trouble himself to turn to the originals or not: he would probably content himself with the notices of them in some current manual of English Literature, or with some essay or monograph. Now, in the myriads of such publications, in vogue or out of vogue, knocked under by their successors or scuffling with their contemporaries, he might have the luck to light on a good guide; he might have the luck to light on Dean Church, or Mark Pattison, or Mr. Leslie Stephen, or Professor Courthope, or Mr. Frederic Harrison; but he is much more likely to make his way to a luminary in the last well-puffed "series." The first article in the creed of the modern book-maker seems to be that the appearance or existence of a good book is a sufficient justification for the production of a bad one to take its place. An excellent monograph is published, and is popular. This is the signal for the manufacture of half a dozen inferior ones, which are mutually destructive, and serve no end except to substitute bad books for a good one, and to make the good one forgotten. Again, a work which has long been classical in criticism is assumed not to be "up to date," and is either edited on this hypothesis, or we have another substituted for it. This in turn yields its vogue—for fashions change quickly in modern taste—to a similar experiment, till a third is announced. Of the relation of criticism to principles, or indeed

to anything else but to their own whims or impressions, these iconoclasts appear to be profoundly unaware.

It requires, needless to say, the utmost wariness and care on the part of those who regulate, and on the part of those who are engaged in, education, to keep this inferior literature in its place. If it were allowed to make its way authoritatively into our schools and Universities, or indeed into any of our educational institutions, the consequences would be most disastrous. It is not so much that it would disseminate error as that it would become influential in more serious ways, æsthetically in its influence on taste, morally in its influence on tone and character, intellectually in lowering the whole standard of aim and attainment in studies.

That the evils which have been described admit of no remedy at present, or perhaps in the present generation, may be fully conceded. But they may be palliated if they cannot be cured, and they must be palliated by the agents to whom we may ultimately look for their cure, education and fearless criticism. As their origin may be mainly ascribed to the failure of the Universities to adapt themselves to new conditions, so on the willingness of the Universities to repair their error must depend all possibility of rectifying the results of it. From its organization at the Universities everything comprehended in the system of liberal study takes its

ply; its standards are there determined, its methods formulated, its aims defined. As a subject of teaching, and as the result of teaching, in its relation to theory and in its relation to practice, it there receives an impression which is permanent. It has been so with classical scholarship, and with Philology; it has been so with Philosophy and Theology, with Jurisprudence and History. What has been imparted in the lecture-rooms of Oxford and Cambridge has orally, and by the pen, become influential wherever these subjects are represented. There is not an educational institute in Great Britain or in the colonies, there is not a serious magazine or review on which it has not set its seal. We have a striking illustration of this in the case of Modern History. Some thirty years ago it was practically unrepresented, either at Oxford or Cambridge. Since then its study has been organized. What has been the result? It has become one of the most flourishing branches of learning. It has reduced chaos to order; it has raised its teaching, and by implication its literature, to a very high standard; it has put the *canaille* of sciolists and fribbles into their proper place; while disciplining energy it has directed it to fruitful objects; it has revolutionized the study of the whole subject.

Thus the condition and fortune of everything which is affected by education depend on the

Universities. All that they do, or neglect to do, passes into precedent. There is nothing susceptible of educational impression which does not take its colour and its characteristics from them. They have made the subjects which are represented in their schools what they are, and every intelligent English citizen proud and grateful.

But, owing to a disastrous confusion between two branches of study which are radically and essentially distinct,—Philology and Belles Lettres,—both Oxford and Cambridge have not only left unorganized, but assisted in the degradation of studies, which are of as much concern, and vital concern, to national life as any which are represented in their Schools. To leave an important department of education unrecognised in their system, is sufficient cause for surprise and regret; but that they should be doing all in their power to prevent any possibility of such a defect being supplied is deplorable. And yet this is what is being done. That Chairs, Schools and Degrees may be established in the interests of Philology, Philology is, by a palpable fiction, identified with Literature. As the result of what the late Professor Huxley denounced as "a fraud upon letters," a Chair founded in the interests of Literature was at Oxford appropriated by the philologists. This has been followed by the establishment of a School, in which all that can provide for the honour of Philology is blended

with all that contributes to the degradation of Literature; while, to give further currency and authority to this absurd complication, the approval of a thesis, on some subject pertaining purely to Philology, entitles the writer to the diploma, not of a Doctor in Philology, but of a Doctor in Literature!

Meanwhile, to make confusion worse confounded, the Universities, or, to speak more correctly, a party in the Universities, are undertaking to provide the country with teachers for the dissemination of literary culture,—for the interpretation of Literature in the proper sense of the term. Whether this is done competently or incompetently depends, of course, and must depend purely on accident, on the willingness and ability, that is to say, of individual teachers to educate themselves. Common standards and common aims they have none. Each does what is right in his own eyes. As some have graduated in the classical schools, some in the Mediæval and Modern Languages Tripos, some in Modern History, some in Moral Science or Theology, and some in nothing, there is naturally much variety in their methods and aims.

But it is when we turn to the works in modern Belles Lettres, and more particularly to those dealing with English Literature, which the University Presses publish, that we realize the full significance of this anarchy. It would

not be going too far to say, that all which is worst in current literature, when at its worst finds in some of these works comprehensive illustration. It is indeed almost an even chance whether a work issuing from those Presses is excellent, whether it is indifferent, or whether it is executed with shameful incompetence.[1]

All, therefore, so far as Belles Lettres are concerned is chaos at the Universities, and all consequently is chaos everywhere else.

The next appeal—for all appeals to the Universities have been vain—must be made to those who regulate the curriculums where Literature is made a subject of teaching. Let them rigorously exclude all but the best books. Let them discourage the study of such Epitomes, Manuals, and Histories as are the work of mere irresponsible book makers, and prescribe in its place the study of literary masterpieces. Without excluding the best modern poetry and prose,

[1] One illustration of the indifference of the authorities of our University Presses to the interest of Literature is so scandalous that it must be specified. Fourteen years ago a series of lectures was delivered by the then Clarke Lecturer in the Hall of Trinity College, Cambridge. They were afterwards published under the title of *From Shakespeare to Pope*, and reviewed in the *Quarterly Review* for October, 1886. The lectures, as the Review showed, absolutely swarmed with blunders, many of them so gross as to be almost incredible. Ever since then the volume has been circulated by the Press, absolutely unrevised, indeed without a single correction, and is now in circulation.

let most attention—for obvious reasons—be paid to the writings of the older masters. Let them lay special stress on the study of criticism, —of works treating of its principles, of works illustrating the application of its principles to particular writers; and let no work be recognised which is not of classical authority. Translations should, of course, as a rule, be avoided; but in such a subject as the principles of criticism, there is not the smallest reason why those works which are most excellent in other languages, such as the *Treatise on the Sublime*, and some portions of Aristotle's *Poetic*, such as Lessing's *Laocoon*, Schiller's *Letters on Æsthetics*, the best Essays of Sainte-Beuve should not be included.[1] Nor can it be emphasized too strongly that the theory on which all literary teaching should proceed is that its object is not so much to plant as to cultivate, not so much to convey information, which, after all, is but its medium, as to inspire, to refine, to elevate. I cannot but think, too, that the foundations of

[1] Cf. what Milton says in prescribing the study of masterpieces in criticism: "This would make them (students) soon perceive what despicable creatures our common rimers and play-writers be, and show them what religious, what glorious and magnificent use might be made of poetry, both in Divine and human things. From hence, and not till now, will be the right season of forming them to be able writers and composers in every excellent matter, when they shall be thus fraught with an universal insight into things."—*Tractate on Education.*

all this might be laid much earlier than they are, especially in our classical schools, by encouraging, as, according to Coleridge, Dr. Boyer used to do, the study of some of our greater writers, such as Shakespeare and Milton, side by side with that of Homer and Sophocles.

But it is in criticism, in criticism competently, honestly, and fearlessly applied, that the chief salvation lies. There is probably no review or newspaper in London which does not number among its contributors men of the first order of ability and intelligence, men who are real scholars and real critics, men who see through all that I have been describing and are sick of it. Let them not remain an impotent minority, but combine, and become influential. If popular Literature aspires to be ambitious, and trespasses on the domains of scholarship and criticism, let them submit it to the tests which it invites, let them try it by the standards which it exacts. There is no more reason for the co-existence of two standards, as is now practically the case, in the production of writings treating of our own Literature than there is in the production of writings dealing with Classical Literature. The work of any one who meddles with the last, even in the way of popularizing it, is instantly called by scholars to a strict account, and sciolism and charlatanry are exploded at once. But in the case of our own Literature

there is no such solidarity. It seems to be assumed that a scholar is one thing and a man of letters another, that the difference between work which appeals to connoisseurs and work which appeals to the public is not simply a difference in degree, but a difference in kind, and that the criteria of the multitude need be the only criteria of what is addressed to the multitude. The manuscript of a History of Greek or Roman Literature, or a monograph on an ancient classic, if it were not at least solid and trustworthy, would have no chance of ever getting beyond a publisher's reader. But a History of English Literature, or a monograph on an English classic, teeming with errors in fact and with absurdities in theory and opinion, will not improbably be regarded as an authority, and pass, unrevised, into more than one edition.

The progressive degradation of Literature and of what is involved in its influence is, and must be, inevitable, unless criticism is prepared watchfully and faithfully to do its duty. Let it guard jealously the standards and touchstones of excellence as distinguished from mediocrity, even though it may be prudent to make great allowances in applying them; let it institute a rigorous censorship over books designed for the use of students at the Universities and in other educational establishments; let it permit no writer to pose in a false position, and deliber-

ately trade on the ignorance and inexperience of his readers; let it discourage in every way the production of worthless and superfluous books, whether in poetry or in prose; and lastly, while fully recognising how much must be conceded to professional authors writing against time, having to court popularity or being fettered by conditions imposed on them by their employers, let it take care that their productions shall at least not be mischievous, either by disseminating error or by corrupting taste.

ENGLISH LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITIES

I. LANGUAGE *VERSUS* LITERATURE AT OXFORD

TO say that the anarchy which has resulted from confusing the distinction between the study and interpretation of Literature as the expression of art and genius, and its study and interpretation as a mere monument of language, has had a most disastrous effect on education generally, would be to state very imperfectly the truth of the case. It has led to inadequate and even false conceptions of what constitutes Literature. It has led to all that is of essential importance in literary study being ignored, and all that is of secondary or accidental interest being preposterously magnified; to the substitution of grammatical and verbal commentary for the relation of a literary masterpiece to history, to philosophy, to æsthetics; to the mechanical inculcation of all that can be imparted, as it has been acquired, by cramming, for the intelligent application of principles to expression. It

has led to the severance of our Literature from all that constitutes its vitality and virtue as an active power, and from all that renders its development and peculiarities intelligible as a subject of historical study. In a word, it has led to a total misconception of the ends at which literary instruction should aim, as well as of its most appropriate instruments and methods. All this is illustrated nowhere more strikingly than in the publications of the two great University Presses. It would be easy to point to editions of English classics, and to works on English Literature, bearing the *imprimatur* of Oxford and Cambridge, in which all that is worst in the opposite extremes of pedantry and dilettantism finds ludicrous expression.

And in thus speaking we are saying nothing more than is notorious, nothing more than is admitted, and admitted unreservedly, in the Universities themselves, or at least at Oxford. But different sections of Academic society regard the matter in different lights. The majority of the classical professors and teachers, deprecating any attempt on the part of the University to meddle with "Literature," treat the whole thing as a joke, and, so far from supposing that the reputation of the University is concerned, find infinite amusement in the constant exposures which are being made in the reviews and newspapers of the absurdities of the "English Literature party." They regard the "study

of Literature" precisely as they regard the University Extension Movement—the one as a contemptible excrescence on our Academic system, the other as a contemptible excrescence on Academic curricula. Another section takes a very different view. Recognising the reasonableness of the appeals which have, during the last twelve years, been made to Oxford to place the study of Literature on the same sound footing as she has placed that of other subjects included in her courses, and discerning clearly that what is required cannot be obtained as long as the interests of Philology and those of Literature continue to collide, this party, unhappily a small minority, has pleaded for the establishment of a School of Literature. They have very properly laid stress on four points: First, that, as the chief justification for the establishment of such a School is the fact that the University is undertaking by innumerable agencies, its Press, its oral teachers both at home and abroad, to disseminate liberal instruction through the medium of English Literature, the principal object of the School should be the education of these agencies. Secondly, they have insisted that, if the interpretation of Literature is to effect what it is of power to effect, if, as an instrument of political instruction, it is to warn, to admonish, to guide, if, as an instrument of moral and æsthetic instruction, it is to exercise that influence on taste, on tone, on sentiment, on opinion, on

character—on all, in short, which is susceptible of educational impression—it must both be properly defined and liberally studied; and they contend that, if it is to be so defined and so studied outside the Universities, it must first be so defined and so studied within. Thirdly, they insist that the study of our own Literature should be associated with that of ancient classical literature, for two indisputable reasons: first, because the basis of all liberal literary culture, of a high standard, must necessarily rest on competent classical attainments, and because, historically speaking, the development and characteristics of the greater part of what is most valuable in our Literature would be as unintelligible, without reference to the Greek and Roman classics, as the Literature of Rome would be without reference to that of Greece. Fourthly, they point out that, as our Literature is, in various intimate ways, associated with the Literatures of Italy, France, and Germany, and that, as an acquaintance with the classics of those countries must form an essential element in a literary education, the comparative study of those Literatures and our own ought, by all means, to be encouraged and provided for. And, fifthly, they show that what is demanded is perfectly feasible. There already exists in the University, they contend, every facility for organizing such a course of Literature as is required. All that is needed is co-ordination. In the Classical Moderations and in

the *Literæ Humaniores* Honour Schools a liberal literary education on the classical side is already provided; two-thirds in fact of the discipline, culture, and attainments desiderated in a literary teacher it is the aim of those Schools to impart. The Taylorian Institute provides instruction in the languages and literatures of the Continent; and, if its professors could be roused into a little more activity, a youth might, in two years, if he pleased,—and that side by side with his severer studies—acquire something more than a superficial acquaintance with the language and writings of Dante and Machiavelli, of Montaigne and Molière, of Lessing and Goethe. What he could not obtain would be instruction and guidance in the study of our own Literature. In a word, all that is required to secure what this party plead for is simply the establishment of a School of English Literature, in the proper acceptation of the term, and the co-ordination of studies which are at present pursued independently. It was proposed that it should take the form of a Post-graduate Honour School, standing in the same relation to the other schools in the University as the old Law and History School used to stand to the old *Literæ Humaniores* School, and as the examination for the Bachelorship in Civil Law now stands to the ordinary Law School. Thus a youth who had graduated in honours in Moderations and in the Final Classical School, who had studied modern literatures at the

Taylorian and our own Literature under its professor, or even by himself, would have an opportunity of displaying his qualifications for an honour diploma in Literature. But the appeals and arguments of this party have been of no avail.

Next come the philologists. They are in possession of the field. All the revenues supporting the Chairs of Language and Literature are their monopoly. They have steadily resisted all attempts on the part of what may be denominated the Liberal party to encroach on their dominions. In their eyes the Universities are simply nurseries for esoteric specialists, and to talk of bringing them into touch with national life is, in their estimation, mere cant. Their attitude towards Literature, generally, is precisely that of the classical party towards our own Literature; they regard it simply as the concern of men of letters, journalists, dilettants, and Extension lecturers. They defeated sixteen years ago an attempt to establish a Chair of English Literature by transforming it into a Chair of Language and securing it for themselves. They attempted, subsequently, to supplement what they had done by the establishment of a School of Language on the model of the Mediæval and Modern Languages Tripos at Cambridge. They were defeated by a coalition of the classical party, the Liberals, of whom we have just spoken, and a third party which insisted on a

compromise between Philology and Literature. Reviving the scheme, they have, by accepting the modifications of the compromisers, just succeeded in getting it accepted. The new School of English Language and Literature is the result of that compromise.

Now it will not be disputed that if the Universities ought, in the interests of liberal culture, to provide adequately for instruction in Literature, they ought also, in the interests of science, to provide adequately for instruction in Philology. It is a branch of learning of immense importance. It is, and ought to be, the peculiar care of Universities, and nothing could be more derogatory to a University than deficiency in such a study. But it is a study in itself. As a science it has no connection with Literature. Indeed the instincts and faculties which separate the temperament of the mathematician from the temperament of the poet are not more radical and essential than the instincts and faculties which separate the sympathetic student of Philology from the sympathetic student of Literature. But no science resolves itself more easily into a pseudo-science, and it is in this degenerate form that it has become linked with Literature and been, in all ages, the butt of wits and men of letters. Nothing but anarchy can result till this mutually degrading alliance be dissolved. It has been forced on the philologists by the compromise to which reference has been

made. Let them be free to rescind it. Let the "pia vota" of Professor Max Müller be fulfilled and Oxford have her School of Philology. That such a School should be established is desirable for three reasons. In the first place, it would define what is at present vague and indeterminate, the scope and functions of Philology. Secondly, it would place that study on its proper footing, and, by placing it on its proper footing, it would not only demonstrate its relation to other studies, but it would enable it to effect fully what it is competent to effect. Thirdly, it might, and probably would, do something to relieve Oxford of the opprobrium of being behind the rest of the learned world in this branch of science. The School would probably not attract many students, for Philology, unlike Literature, can never appeal to more than a small minority. If, therefore, the choice lay between the institution of a School of Philology and that of a School of Literature, there can be no doubt which should have precedence. But no such choice is offered. If the philologists were not strong enough to refuse to compromise, they are strong enough to crush any attempt to forestall them.

Let us now turn to the constitution of the School which has been the result of this arrangement, and which will authorize the University to confer, not, be it remembered, an ordinary, but an honour, degree in English Language and

Literature. The following are the Regulations. The subjects for examination are four. 1. Portions of English authors. 2. The History of the English Language. 3. The History of English Literature. 4. In the case of those candidates who aim at a place in the first or second class, a Special Subject of language or literature. The portions of the authors specified are these. *Beowulf*, the texts printed in Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader, King Horn, Havelok*; Laurence Minot, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the *Prologue, The Knight's Tale, The Man of Law's, The Prioress's, Sir Thopas, The Monk's, The Nun Priest's, The Pardoner's, The Clerk's, The Squire's, The Second Nun's, The Canon Yeoman's.* Next come the *Prologue* and the first seven *passus* (text B) of *Piers Ploughman.* Then come select plays of Shakespeare, chosen apparently at haphazard, *Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet, Richard the Second, Twelfth Night, Julius Cæsar, Winter's Tale, King Lear.* Then we have the following extraordinary farrago :—

Bacon's *Essays.*

Milton, with a special study of *Paradise Lost* and the *Areopagitica.*

Dryden's *Essay on Epic* (sic).

Pope's *Satires and Epistles.*

Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*—the Lives of Eighteenth-Century Poets.

Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World.*

Burke's *Thoughts on the Present Discontents.*

Lyrical Ballads (Wordsworth and Coleridge), Shelley's *Adonais.*[1]

The second part of the examination will be on the History of the English Language. "Candidates will be examined in Gothic (the Gospel of St. Mark), and in translation from Old English and Middle English authors not specially offered."

This is to be followed by the History of English Literature, to which portion of the Regulations the following odd clause is appended: "the examination will include the History of Criticism and of style in prose and verse." Last come the special subjects designed for "those who aim at a place in the First or Second Class." Six of these consist of certain prescribed periods of English Literature. The other subjects are as follows:—

(1) Old English Language and Literature down to 1150 A.D.

(2) Middle English Language and Literature, 1150–1400 A.D.

(3) Old French Philology with special reference to Anglo-Norman French, together with a

[1] For the sort of textbook from which the student who is a candidate for "honours in English" will þe required to get his knowledge of this poem, see *infra*, the review of the Clarendon Press Edition of Shelley's *Adonais.*

special study of the following texts :—*Computus of Phillippe de Thaun, Voyage of St. Brandan, The Song of Dermot and the Earl, Les Contes moralisés de Nicole Bozon.*

(4) Scandinavian Philology, with special reference to Icelandic, together with a special study of the following texts :—*Gylfaginning, Laxdœla Saga, Gunnlaugssaga Ormstungu.*

(5) French Literature down to 1400 A.D. in its bearing on English Literature.

(6) Italian Literature as influencing English down to the death of Milton.

(7) German Literature from 1500 A.D. to the death of Goethe in its bearing on English Literature.

(8) History of Scottish Poetry.

Such is the scheme which will, in conjunction with the similar scheme at Cambridge, supply England and the colonies with their literary professors. Let us examine it in detail. The first thing which strikes us is the contrast between the competence and judgment displayed in the organization of the philological part of the course and the confusion, inadequacy, and flimsiness so conspicuous in the literary part. Nothing could be more satisfactory than the provisions made for the study of Language. They are obviously the work of legislators who knew what they were about, and who, but for the thwarting requirements of the provisions for Literature,

would have proceeded to a superstructure worthy of the foundation. A student who, in addition to having mastered the prescribed works in Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, and Middle English, is competent to translate and comment on unprepared passages from those dialects, has certainly laid the foundation of sound scholarship in an important department of Philology. In the fact that what properly belongs to his study has been relegated to the subjects out of which he has only the option of choosing one, we have a lamentable illustration of the effects of the compromise forced on the philologists. If, for the literary portion of the curriculum, a candidate could substitute the first four of the special subjects, he would have completed a thoroughly satisfactory course of Philology, so far at least as relates to the Teutonic and Romance languages.

But to pass from what concerns Philology to what concerns Literature. Now in considering this point it is necessary to remember that we are not dealing with the regulations of any subordinate institution or curriculum, with provincial Universities and seminaries, or with schemes of study in which Literature is only one out of many subjects. We are dealing with a Final Honour School at Oxford, with regulations which will inevitably form a precedent and model wherever the study of English literature shall be organized in Great Britain. We are dealing with a school which is to educate those who are

to educate the country. Nothing, therefore, could be more disastrous than unsoundness and deficiency in the provisions of such an institution, nothing more deplorable than its giving countenance and authority to error and inadequacy. It is not too much to say that, if this scheme had been designed with the express object of degrading the standard of literary teaching, and of perpetuating all that is worst in present systems, it could hardly have been better adapted for its purpose. Not to dwell upon subordinate defects, it completely severs the study of our own literature from that of the ancient classical literatures. It necessitates no knowledge of any of the Continental literatures. It ignores absolutely the higher criticism. Contracting Literature within the narrowest bounds, its selection of books for special study is worthy of an Army Examination. In the wretched jumble in which Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* jostles Shelley's *Adonais* and Burke's *Thoughts on the Present Discontents* Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, no attempt is made to discriminate between compositions which are representative, either critically of the work of particular authors, or historically of particular epochs, and works which have no such significance, while many of the most important departments of our prose Literature are unrepresented. Nor is this all. It affords every facility for cramming. It is adapted to test nothing but

what may be mechanically acquired and mechanically imparted, what may be poured out from lectures into notebooks, and from notebooks into examination papers. Proceeding on the assumption that a literary education is merely the acquisition of positive knowledge, it neither requires nor encourages, as the prescription of an essay or thesis, or even "taste-paper," might have done, any of the finer qualities of literary culture, such, for example, as a sense of style, sound judgment, good taste, the touch of the scholar. We can assure these legislators, and we speak from knowledge, that, setting aside the philological portion of this curriculum, which is, so far as it goes, solid enough, an experienced crammer, would, in about three months furnish an astute youth with all that is requisite for graduating in this school.

But to proceed to details. Conceive the qualifications of an interpreter and critic of English Literature, a graduate in Honours in his subject, whose education has proceeded on the hypothesis that he need have no acquaintance with the classics of Greece and Rome. Would any competent scholar deny that the history of English Literature, in its mature expression, is little less than the history of the modifications of native genius and characteristics by classical influence, that the development and peculiarities of our epic, dramatic, elegiac, didactic, pastoral, much of our lyric, of our satire and of other species of

our poetry is, historically speaking, unintelligible without reference to ancient classical literature? That what is true of our poetry is true of our criticism, of our oratory, sacred and secular, of our dialectic and epistolary Literature, of our historical composition, of the greater part, in short, of our national masterpieces in prose? What, indeed, the Literature of Greece was to that of Rome, the Literatures of Greece and Rome have been to ours.[1]

It was the influence of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Menander, Diphilus, which transformed the *Ludi Scenici* and the Atellan farces into the tragedies of Ennius and Pacuvius and

[1] The Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, one of the chief legislators for the new School, thinks otherwise, and we should like to place the following passage on record. In his extraordinary *History of English Prose* (p. 485) he writes thus: "The idea that English literature rests upon a classical basis has been formulated and industriously circulated as the watchword of a pedantic faction, and hardly any organ of current literature has proved itself strong enough, or vigilant enough, to secure itself against the insidious entrance of the above indoctrination." And so it comes to pass that we read in the account of the debate in Congregation, on the occasion of the former attempt to establish this School:—

"The proposal to add the Professors of Greek and Latin to the Board of Studies was rejected by thirty-eight votes to twenty-four, Professor Earle maintaining that the fallacious notion that English literature was derived from the classics was so strong that it was unwise to place even the Professor of Latin on the Board."—*Times*, May 26, 1887.

the comedies of Plautus and Terence. It was the influence of the Roman drama and of a drama modelled on the Roman which transformed, so far at least as structure and style are concerned, our similarly rude native experiments into the tragedies and comedies of Shakespeare. On the epics of Greece were modelled the epics of Rome, and on the epics of Greece and Rome are modelled our own great epics. Of our elegiac poetry, to employ the term in its conventional sense, one portion is largely indebted to Theocritus, Moschus, and Virgil, and another to Catullus and Ovid. Almost all our didactic poetry is modelled on the didactic poetry of Rome. Theocritus and Virgil have furnished the archetypes for our eclogues and pastorals. One important branch of our lyric poetry springs directly from Pindar, another important branch directly from Horace, another directly from the choral odes of the Attic dramatists and of Seneca. Our heroic satire, from Hall to Lord Lytton, is simply the counterpart—often, indeed, a mere imitation—of Roman satire. And if this is true of our satire, it is equally true of our best ethical poetry. The Epistles, which fill so large a space in the poetical literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, derive their origin from those of Horace. To the *Heroides* of Ovid we owe a whole series of important poems from Drayton to Cawthorn. The Greek anthology and Martial have furnished

the archetypes of our epigrams and of our epitaphs. It is the same with our prose. The history of English eloquence begins from the moment when the Roman classics moulded and coloured our style, when periodic prose was modelled on Cicero and Livy, when analytic prose was modelled on Sallust, Seneca, and Tacitus. With the exception of fiction, there is no important branch of our prose composition, the development and characteristics of which are historically intelligible without reference to the ancients. How radically inadequate must any study of the principles of criticism be, which has no reference to the critical works of the Greek and Roman writers, is obvious. But it is not merely in tracing the development and explaining the peculiarities generally of our prose and of our poetry that competent classical scholarship is indispensable. Is it not notorious that in each generation, from Spenser to Tennyson, from More to Froude, our leading poets and prose writers have been, with very few exceptions, men nourished on classical literature and saturated with its influence? Many entire masterpieces, much, and in some cases the greater portion, of other masterpieces, particularly in our poetry, are simply unintelligible—we are speaking, of course, of serious critical students—except to classical scholars. Take, for example, the *Faerie Queen*, and the *Hymns* of Spenser, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, *Comus*, *Lycidas*,

and *Samson Agonistes*, Pope's satires, the two great odes of Gray, Collins's odes to *Fear* and the *Passions*, Wordsworth's great *Ode* and his *Laodamia*, Shelley's *Adonais* and *Prometheus Unbound*, Landor's *Hellenics*, much of the poetry of Tennyson, Browning, and Matthew Arnold. Indeed it would be as preposterous to attempt any critical study of our Literature, without reference to the ancients, as it would be for a man to set up as an interpreter in Roman Literature without reference to the Greek.

And the effect of this severance of the study of the ancient classics from the study of our own is written large throughout the whole domain of education, in the instruction given in schools and institutes, in the monographs, manuals, and "editions" which pour from scholastic presses. In one of the most popular manuals now in circulation, the writer gravely tells us that "the pastoral name of *Lycidas* was chosen by Milton to signify purity of character," adding "in Theocritus a goat was so called λευκίτας for its whiteness," that Comus "the drinker of human blood" revelled in the palace of Agamemnon.[1] Another writer confounds the "choruses" in Shakespeare with the choruses of the Greek plays. Another, commenting on the symbolism of ivy in the wreath

[1] *καὶ μὴν πεπωκώς γ', ὡς θρασύνεσθαι πλέον,*
βρότειον αἷμα, κῶμος ἐν δόμοις μένει
δύσπεμπτος ἔξω ξυγγόνων 'Ερινυών.
—*Agamem.*, 1159–61.

of a poet, tells us that it indicates "constancy."[1] Nothing is more common than to find elaborate critical comments on the *Faerie Queen* without the smallest reference to its connection with Aristotle's *Ethics*, and on Wordsworth's great *Ode* without any reference to Plato. But such is the confidence reposed in Professor Earle and his theory, and so determined are the legislators for the new School to exclude all connection with classical literature, that it is not admitted even as a special subject. A candidate has, as we have seen, the option of studying the influence exercised on old English literature by French, and on later literature by Italian and German; but the one thing which he has not the option of studying is the influence exercised on it by the literatures of Greece and Rome. Some of our readers may remember that a few years ago a public appeal was made for an expression of opinion on the question of associating the study of our own classics and that of the ancients. Opinions were elicited from many of the most distinguished men in England. They were all but unanimous, not merely in supporting the association, but in deprecating the severance. So wrote Mr. Gladstone, Cardinal Manning, Professor Jowett, Matthew Arnold, Lord Lytton, Mr. John Morley, Walter Pater, AddingtonSymonds; so

[1] For ample illustration of this, see *infra* the review of the Clarendon Press edition of Shelley's *Adonais*.

wrote the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, the Rector of Lincoln, the President of Magdalen, the Warden of All Souls, and many others. We may add, also—for we are now at liberty to state it publicly—that this was emphatically the opinion of Robert Browning. We cannot, of course, quote these opinions *in extenso*,[1] and that of the late Professor Jowett and a portion of that of Mr. John Morley must suffice.

> I am as strongly of opinion that in an Honour School of English Literature or Modern Literature the subject should not be separated from classical literature, as I am of opinion that English literature should have a place in our curriculum.

So writes Professor Jowett.

> It seems to me to be as impossible effectively to study English literature, except in close association with the classics, as it would be to grasp the significance of mediæval or modern institutions without reference to the political creations of Greece and Rome. I should be very sorry to see the study of Greek and Latin writers displaced, or cut off from the study of our own.

So writes Mr. John Morley.

But the Professor of Anglo-Saxon and his friends, as we have seen, think otherwise, and have, unhappily for the interests of letters and education, persuaded Oxford to think otherwise too. We say advisedly the interests of letters and

[1] They may all be found in full in a *Pall Mall* "*Extra*" (January, 1887), and in the present writer's *Study of English Literature*.

education. For the precedent of excluding from a School of "Literature," and that at the chief centre and nursery of liberal culture, the Literatures of Greece and Rome cannot but be detrimental to the vitality and influence of the ancient classics; and, as Froude truly observed, both the national taste and the tone of the national intellect would suffer serious decline, if they lost their authority. The reaction against philological study which has set in during the last ten years has given them a new lease of life. But the spirit of the age is against them; they have rivals in languages far easier to acquire; they are not, and never can be, in touch with the many. Let them become disassociated from our curriculums of Literature, and they will cease to be influential, They will cease to be studied seriously, to be studied even in the original, except by mere scholars.

Another absurdity, not less monstrous, in these regulations, is the absence of all provision for instruction in the principles of criticism. There is indeed an unmeaning clause about the history of criticism, and of style in verse and prose, being included in the examination; but as nothing is specified, and as no work on criticism, with the exception of Dryden's *Discourse on Epic Poetry*, and Johnson's *Lives* (of eighteenth-century poets),[1] is included in the books

[1] It is amusing to notice how carefully the greater part of

prescribed for special study, it is plain that this important subject has no place. Why it should not have occurred to these legislators to substitute, say, for Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* and Burke's *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*, some work which would at least have opened the eyes of the literary professors of the future to the existence of philosophical criticism, is certainly odd. Had they prescribed select essays from Hume; and Shaftesbury's *Advice to an Author*, or Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, or Burke's *Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful*, or even the critical portions of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, with the two essays of Wordsworth, it would have been something. But the truth is that, as they have excluded, except from the optional subjects, all literatures but the English, one absurdity has involved them in another. The course for the literary education of our future professors, proceeding on the principle that they need know no language but Gothic and Anglo-Saxon, has necessitated the elimination of all the great

what is most precious and instructive in Johnson's work, the lives namely of Cowley and Dryden, and the noble critique of *Paradise Lost*, is expressly excluded, and the greater part of what is most trivial, and regarded by himself as trivial, the lives of the minor poets of the eighteenth century, selected instead. Macaulay ranks the lives of Cowley and Dryden, with that of Pope, as the masterpieces of the work; and Johnson himself considered the life of Cowley to be the best.

masterpieces of critical literature. As they are assumed to know no Greek, they can have no serious instruction in such works as Aristotle's *Poetic* and *Rhetoric*, and in the *Treatise on the Sublime*. As they are assumed to know no Latin, they can have no instruction in Roman criticism. On the same principle such works as Lessing's *Laocoon* and *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, Schiller's Æsthetical Letters and Essays, Villemain's Lectures, and Sainte-Beuve's Essays, can find no place in their curriculum of study. And so it comes to pass that Dryden's *Discourse on Epic Poetry* and Johnson's *Lives* of the eighteenth-century poets, represent—*proh pudor!*—the course in Criticism.

Now it is not too much to say that, for a University like Oxford to confer an honour degree in English Literature on a student who need never have read a line of the works to which we have referred, is to authorize not simply superficiality, but sheer imposture. How can a teacher deal adequately even with the subject which these regulations profess to include—the history of criticism—who need have no acquaintance with the *Poetic* and *Rhetoric*, the *Treatise on the Sublime*, and the *Institutes of Oratory*? How could a teacher possibly be a competent exponent and critic of the masterpieces of our literature, who had not received a proper critical training, and how could he have any pretension to such a training when all that is best in

criticism had been expressly excluded from his education?

It may be urged that he would himself supply these deficiencies, that the study of our own Literature would naturally lead him to the study of other Literatures, that intelligent curiosity, ambition, or a sense of shame would induce him to supplement voluntarily, and by his own efforts, what he needed in his profession. In some instances this would undoubtedly be the case. In the great majority of instances such a supposition would be against all analogy. As a general rule, a high honour degree in any subject represented at the Universities is final. It winds a man up for life. It determines, fixes, and colours his methods, his views, his tone, in all that relates to the subject in which he has graduated. If he chooses teaching as a profession, he has no inducement to correct, to modify, or even materially add to what has been imparted to him, for his scholastic reputation has been made, and a comfortable independence is assured. To very many men, indeed, who go up to the Universities with the intention of following teaching as a profession, a high degree is a mere investment, the one instinct in them which is not quite banausic being the conscientious thoroughness with which they impart what they have been taught. Nothing, therefore, is of more importance to education than the sound constitution of the

Honour Schools of Oxford and Cambridge, and nothing could be more disastrous than the toleration in those Schools of inadequate standards, and of palpably erroneous theories of study.

But to return to the Regulations. The ridiculous disproportion between the ground covered and the work involved in the different "special subjects" open to the option of candidates, would seem to indicate, either that the regulators are very inadequately informed on those subjects, or that divided counsels have resulted in the settlement of very different standards of requirement. Compare, for instance, what is involved respectively in such subjects as "English Literature between 1700 and 1745," and "The History of Scottish Poetry." Why, a competent knowledge of the history of Scotch poetry in the fifteenth century alone would be more than an equivalent to the first subject. Not less absurd is the prescription of "English Literature between 1745 and 1797" as an alternative for "English Literature between 1558 and 1637." The prescription of such "special subjects" as the influence exercised on our Literature by the Literatures of Italy, Germany, and France, is one of the few steps in a wise direction discernible in these regulations; but, as no student is free to take more than one of them, or required to take any of them at all, their inclusion in no way affects the constitution of the School. A

competent literary education is not very much furthered by a student being invited to study how our Literature has been affected by one out of the five Literatures which have influenced it. As, moreover, the integrity of a chain depends on its weakest link, so the efficiency of examinational tests, in their application to purely optional subjects, depends on that subject in the list which involves least labour. A candidate who can "get a first" out of "English Literature between 1700 and 1745," or between 1745 and 1797, will be much too wise to attempt to "get a first" out of subjects which will require treble the time and labour to master. Is it likely that candidates, anxious, naturally, from less lofty motives than the love of Literature for its own sake, to obtain an honour degree, will, after laboriously acquiring Anglo-Saxon and Middle English, which are compulsory, voluntarily specialize in a subject requiring a knowledge of Italian and German, when it is open to them to choose, as their special subject, "Old English Language and Literature down to 1150"?

The statute authorizing the foundation of this School recites that in its curriculum and examinations "equal weight" is, "as far as possible, to be given to Language and Literature, provided always that candidates who offer special subjects shall be at liberty to choose subjects connected either with Language or Literature, or

with both." It would be interesting to know what this means. If by "equal weight" be meant equality in the proportions of what is prescribed for the study of Literature, and what is prescribed for the study of Language, the provision is stultified by the very constitution of the course. To suppose that the history of English Literature, and the special study of a few particular works like Shelley's *Adonais*, Burke's *Present Discontents*, and the *Lyrical Ballads*, is equivalent to the History of the English language, the Gospel of St. Mark in Gothic, the *Beowulf*, and a volume of extracts in Anglo-Saxon, *King Horn*, *Havelok*, *Sir Gawain*, and the prologue and seven *passus* of *Piers Ploughman* in Middle English, is palpably absurd. If by "equal weight" be meant that an examiner is to assign equal marks to candidates who distinguish themselves in Literature, and to candidates who distinguish themselves in Language, it involves gross injustice. For while the latter have every opportunity for displaying knowledge and competence, the former have not. If a student has literary tastes and sympathies, if he is conversant with the Classics, if, attracted by what is best not merely in our own but in other modern Literatures, he has indulged himself in their study, if he has made himself a good critic and acquired a good style, what chance has he of doing his attainments and accomplishments justice? But if it be meant that "equal weight" will be given,

not to literary merit regarded as Sainte-Beuve and Matthew Arnold would regard it, but regarded in relation to the standard indicated by the regulations of the School, then the philologists would have just reason to complain.

As the constitution of this School is still open to amendment, it is devoutly to be hoped that Oxford will see its way to reconsidering a matter so seriously affecting the interests of education and culture. It is neither too late to remedy what has been done, nor to devise a remedy. Let it be remembered that there is an essential distinction between what should constitute an Honour School and what should constitute a Pass School, between what is to educate those who are to educate others, and what guarantees nothing more than a smattering. The present institution could be reformed in two ways. By reducing the philological part of its provisions to the level of the literary part, it could, with a little further simplification, be made into an excellent Pass School, which would supply a real want. By eliminating the literary part, and adding proportionately to the philological, it could be transformed into a perfectly satisfactory Honour School of Modern Languages. But no modification could make it into an Honour School of English Literature correspondingly adequate, for the simple reason that the study of English Literature cannot be isolated from the study of those literatures with which it is

inseparably linked. The absurdity of assuming that the student of Philology could separate a single language or dialect from the group to which it belongs, that he could isolate Anglo-Saxon from Gothic, or Middle English from Anglo-Saxon, the Celtic of the Cymbry from the Celtic of the Gaels, is not greater than to assume that the study of our Literature can be severed from the study of those literatures which stand in precisely the same relation to it as one of those dialects stands to the others in the same group.

If the legislators of this School decline to reform it, then it is the duty of Oxford—a duty which she owes alike to education and to her own honour—to counteract the mischief which this institution must, by degrading throughout England and the colonies the whole level of liberal instruction and study on its most important side, inevitably do. To the herd of imperfectly and erroneously disciplined teachers which this institution will turn loose on education, let her oppose, at least, a minority which shall worthily represent her. Let her establish a proper degree or diploma in Literature. There exist, as we have already said, scattered throughout the various institutions of the University, nearly all the facilities for a complete course in this subject, and nothing more is needed than to encourage and render possible their co-ordination. Let it be open to a man who has obtained

a high class in Moderations and in the Final Classical Schools, who has availed himself of the opportunities offered for the study of Modern Languages and Literatures in the Taylorian Institute, and who has studied what he would at present have to study for himself, our own Literature—let it be open to him to present himself for examination in these subjects, and to obtain, as the result of such an examination, a degree analogous to the Bachelorship of Civil Law. It would no doubt not be possible for these studies to be pursued, systematically, side by side with the work required for a high class in Moderations and *Literæ Humaniores.* Nor is it necessary. There need be no limit assigned to the time at which a candidate would be free to qualify himself for obtaining this diploma. As a general rule it would probably be about six months, possibly a year, after the attainment of the present degree in Arts. And, considering the high prizes open to teachers in Literature, it would be well worth a student's while to spend this additional time in preparing himself for the examination. If a post-graduate scholarship, analogous to the Craven or the Derby scholarships, could be founded for the encouragement of a comparative study of Classical and Modern Literature, an important step would, at any rate, be taken in a right direction; something would be done for the competent equipment of future Professors of Literature.

Thus would a precedent, disastrous beyond expression to the interests of liberal instruction and culture, as well as to the reputation of the University—we mean the severance of the study of Classical Literature from that of our own—be at least deprived of its authority. Thus would the mass at any rate be leavened, and such institutions in the provinces and elsewhere as have, unlike Oxford and Cambridge, had the wisdom to separate their Chairs of Language and Literature, know where to go for those who should fill them; and thus, finally, would there be some chance of the literary curriculum in Oxford ceasing to be a by-word in the Universities of the Continent and America.

Since the first edition of these essays appeared the liberality of Mr. John Passmore Edwards has supplied the scholarship here desiderated, and Oxford has instituted a University scholarship, bearing the donor's name, "for the encouragement and promotion of the study of English Literature in connection with the Classical Literatures of Greece and Rome."

ENGLISH LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITIES [1]

II. TEXT BOOKS

IF any proof were needed of what has been insisted on over and over again, that, until the Universities provide adequately for the proper study of English Literature—for the study of it side by side with Classical Literature—there will be small hope of its finding competent critics and interpreters, it would be afforded by the volume before us. For this volume the delegates of the Oxford University Press are responsible; and in allowing it their *imprimatur* they have been guilty of a very grave error. No such standard of editing would have been tolerated in any other subject in which they undertake to provide books. A work pertaining to Classics, to History, to Philosophy, to Science, marked by corresponding deficiencies, would have been suppressed at once, until those defi-

[1] Shelley's *Adonais*, edited with introduction and notes by William Michael Rossetti. (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press.)

ciencies had been supplied. To Mr. Rossetti himself we attach no blame. What he was competent to do he has, for the most part, done well and conscientiously,—conscientiously, as may be judged from the fact that, while the poem itself occupies twenty pages in large type, Mr. Rossetti's dissertations and notes occupy one hundred and twenty-eight in small type. It was, indeed, his misfortune, rather than his fault, to be entrusted with a work which required a peculiar qualification, an intimate acquaintance, that is to say, with Classical Literature. That he has no pretension to this is abundantly plain from his Introduction and from every page of his notes.

When one of the Universities undertakes to provide our colleges and schools with comments and notes on a poem so saturated with classicism as *Adonais*, the least that could be expected from bodies who are, as it were, the guardians of classical literature, is the provision that the classical part of the work should be done at least competently; it would be hardly too much, perhaps, to expect that it should be done excellently. Of this part of Mr. Rossetti's work we scarcely know which are the worse—his sins of commission or his sins of omission. His classical qualifications for commenting on a poem as unintelligible, critically speaking, without constant reference to the Platonic dialogues, particularly to the *Symposium* and the *Timæus*, and to the

Greek poets, as the *Æneid* would be without reference to the Homeric poems and the *Argonautica* of Apollonius, appear to begin and end with some acquaintance with Mr. Lang's version of Bion and Moschus. We will give a few specimens. Mr. Rossetti is greatly puzzled with Shelley's allusion to Urania in stanzas 2 to 4.

> " Where was lone Urania
> When Adonais died ? "

> " Most musical of mourners, weep again .
> Lament, anew, Urania ! "

" Why out of the nine sisters," he asks, " should the Muse of Astronomy be selected ? Keats never wrote about astronomy." Perhaps, he suggests, Shelley was not thinking of the Muse Urania, " but of Aphrodite Urania." Yet, if so, why should she be called " musical " ?—a question to be asked, no doubt, as our old friend Falstaff would say. However, after balancing the respective claims of both, he finally comes to the conclusion that the Urania of *Adonais* is Aphrodite. If Mr. Rossetti had been acquainted with a work to which he never even refers, but which exercised immense influence over Shelley's poem —the *Symposium* of Plato—it would have saved him two pages of speculation. His ignorance of this is the more surprising as Shelley has himself translated the dialogue. But Mr. Rossetti need not, in this case, have gone so far afield. Has he never read the prologue to the seventh

book of Milton's *Paradise Lost*? In his note on the lines—

> "The one remains, the many change and pass,"

it is really pitiable to find him supposing that this is an allusion to "the universal mind," and "the individuated minds which we call human beings," when any schoolboy could have told him that the allusion is, of course, a technical one to the Platonic "forms" or archetypes; while "the power" in stanza 42, the "sustaining love" in stanza 54, and the "one spirit" in stanza 43, are allusions respectively to the Aphrodite Urania in the discourse of Eryximachus in the *Symposium*, and to the Divine Artificer in the *Timæus*. And these dialogues form the proper commentary on Shelley's metaphysics in this poem.

Still more extraordinary is Mr. Rossetti's note on "wisdom the mirrored shield"—

> "What was then
> Wisdom, the mirrored shield?"

(st. 27), which is as follows: "Shelley was, I apprehend, thinking of the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto (!). In that poem we read of a magic shield which casts a supernatural and intolerable splendour . . . a sea monster, not a dragon, so far as I recollect, becomes one of the victims of the mirrored shield." This slovenly and perfunctory mode of reference is, we may remark in passing, hardly the sort of thing to be expected

in works issued from University Presses. We wonder what the Universities would say to an editor of Virgil who, in commenting on some Homeric allusion in his author, contented himself with observing that Virgil "is here thinking of the *Iliad*," and, "so far as I can recollect," etc. The reference is, we need hardly remark, not to any magic shield in the *Orlando*, but to the *scutum crystallinum* of Pallas Athene, as any well-informed fourth-form schoolboy would know. If Mr. Rossetti will turn to Bacon's *Wisdom of the Ancients*, chap. vii., he will find some information on this subject, which may be of use to him, should this work run into a second edition. Take, again, the note on the symbolism of the flowers and cypress cone in stanza 33:—

> "His head was bound with pansies overblown,
> And faded violets, white and pied and blue;
> And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
> Round whose rude shaft dark ivy tresses grew."

Here the editor's ignorance of ancient Classical Literature has led him into a whole labyrinth of blunders and misconceptions. "The ivy," he says, "indicates constancy in friendship"! Is it credible that a Clarendon Press editor should be ignorant that ivy—*doctarum hederæ præmia frontium*—is the emblem of the poet? The violet, he remarks, indicates modesty. It neither indicates, nor can possibly indicate, anything of the kind. Its traditional signification, deduced

perhaps from Pliny's remark (*Nat. Hist.*, xxi. c. 38), that it is one of the longest-lived of flowers, is fidelity. But the passage of which Shelley was thinking when he wrote this stanza —a passage to which Mr. Rossetti makes no reference at all, was *Hamlet*, act iv. sc. 1: "There is pansies that's for thoughts . . . I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died." So that it is quite possible that the "faded violets," associated as these flowers are with the Muses and the Graces, merely symbolize the fading and drooping towards what may be further symbolized in the cypress cone, —death. We are by no means sure, however, that the cypress cone does, as Mr. Rossetti remarks, "explain itself." Shelley, assuming he gave the image another application, was doubtless thinking of Silvanus—"teneram ab radice ferens, Silvane, cupressum," *Georg.* i. 20 (see, too, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, I. vi. st. 14), and may possibly have been symbolizing his sympathy with the genius of the woods—have been referring to that "gazing on Nature's naked loveliness," which he describes in stanza 31. In any case, Mr. Rossetti has entirely misinterpreted the meaning of the whole passage.

Wherever classical knowledge is required—as it is in almost every stanza—he either gives no note at all, or he blunders. Thus in stanza 24 he gives no note on the use of the word "secret." In stanza 28 he has evidently not the smallest

notion of the meaning of the word "obscene" as applied to ravens. The fine adaptations from *Lucretius* (II. 578–580) in stanza 21, and again from II. 990–1010 in stanzas 20 and 42; the adaptation from the *Agamemnon* (49–51) in stanza 17; from the fragments of the *Polyidus* of Euripides in stanza 39; from the *Iliad* (vi. 484) in stanza 34; from Theocritus, *Idyll.*, i. 66, and Virg., *Ecl.*, x. 9–10 in stanza 2; and again from Theocritus, *Idyll.*, i. 77 seqq., from which the procession of the mourners is adapted, and on which the whole architecture of the poem is modelled—all these are alike unnoticed. Nor is Mr. Rossetti more fortunate in explaining allusions to passages in other literatures. The adaptation of the sublime passage in Isaiah (xiv. 9, 10), by which one of the finest parts of the poem was suggested, stanzas 45 and 46; the singular reminiscence in stanza 28:—

> "The vultures
> . . . Whose wings rain contagion;"

of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, act ii. sc. 1, where he speaks of the raven which

> "Doth shake contagion from her sable wings;"

the obvious reminiscence of Dante, *Inf.*, 44 seqq. in stanza 44; of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, v. 3, which forms the proper commentary on lines 7 and 8 of stanza 3; of none of these is any notice taken. On many important points of interpretation we differ *toto cœlo* from Mr.

Rossetti. The "fading splendour," for example, in stanza 22, cannot possibly mean "fading as being overcast by sorrow and dismay" (cf. stanza 25), it simply means vanishing, receding from sight—a magnificently graphic epithet. Is Mr. Rossetti acquainted with the proleptic use of adjectives and participles? We may add that Mr. Rossetti has not even taken the trouble to ascertain who was the writer of the famous article, of which so much is said both in the preface of the poem and in the poem itself, but "presumes," etc. *Et sic omnia.* And *sic omnia* it will inevitably continue to be, until the Universities are prepared to do their duty to education by placing the study of our national Literature on a proper footing.

It is, we repeat, no reproach to Mr. Rossetti, who has distinguished himself in more important studies than the production of scholastic text-books, that he should have failed in an undertaking which happened to require peculiar qualifications. Indeed, our respect for Mr. Rossetti and our sense of his useful services to Belles Lettres would have induced us to spare him the annoyance of an exposure of the deficiencies of this work, had it not illustrated, so comprehensively and so strikingly, the disastrous effects of the severance of the study of English Literature from that of Ancient Classical Literature at our Universities.

ENGLISH LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITIES[1]

III. TEXT BOOKS

MORE than a century and a half has passed since Pope thus expressed himself about philologists,—

> "'Tis true on words is still our whole debate,
> Dispute of *Me* or *Te*, of *aut* or *at*,
> To sound or sink in *Cano* O or A,
> To give up Cicero or C or K;
> The critic eye, that microscope of wit,
> Sees hairs and pores, examines bit by bit;
> How parts relate to parts or they to whole,
> The body's harmony, the beaming soul,
> Are things which Kuster, Burmann, Wasse shall see,
> When man's whole frame is obvious to a *Flea.*"

We need scarcely say that we have far too much respect for Dr. Aldis Wright and for his distinguished coadjutor to apply such a description as this to them as individuals, for no one can appreciate more heartily than we do their monumental contribution to the textual criticism of

[1] *Shakespeare—Select Plays. Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press. MDCCCXC.)

Shakespeare, but we can make no such reserve in speaking of this edition of *Hamlet*. A more deplorable illustration, we do not say of the subjection of Literature to Philology, for that would very imperfectly represent the fact, but of the absolute substitution of Philology, and of Philology in the lowest sense of the term, for Literature it would be impossible to imagine. Had it been expressly designed to prove that its editors were wholly unconscious of the artistic, literary, and philosophical significance of Shakespeare's masterpiece, it could scarcely have taken a more appropriate form.

The volume contains 117 pages of Shakespeare's text, printed in large type; the text is preceded by a preface of twelve pages, and followed by notes occupying no less than 121 pages in very small type; so that the work of the poet stands in pretty much the same relation to that of his commentators as Falstaff's bread stood to his sack. In the case of a play like *Hamlet*, so subtle, so suggestive, so pregnant with critical and philosophical problems of all kinds, commentary on a scale like this might have been quite appropriate. But in this stupendous mass of exegesis and illustration there is, with the exception of one short passage, literally not a line about the play as a work of art, not a line about its structure and architecture, about its style, about its relations to æsthetic, about its metaphysic, its ethic, about the character of Hamlet, or about the character of any other

person who figures in the drama. The only indication that it is regarded in any other light than as affording material for philological and antiquarian discussion is a short quotation, huddled in at the conclusion of the preface, from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, and an intimation that "Hamlet's madness has formed the subject of special investigation by several writers, among others by Dr. Conolly and Sir Edward Strachey."

A more comprehensive illustration of the truth of the indictment brought against philologists by Voltaire, Pope, Lessing, and Sainte-Beuve than is supplied by the notes in this volume it would be difficult to find. Dulness, of course, may be assumed, and of mere dulness we do not complain; but a combination of prolixity, irrelevance, and absolute incapacity to distinguish between what to ninety-nine persons in every hundred must be purely useless and what to ninety-nine persons in every hundred is the information which they expect from a commentator, is intolerable. We will give a few illustrations. A plain man or a student for examination comes to these lines:—

> "'Tis the sport to have the enginer
> Hoist with his own petar;"

and, though he knows what the general sense is wishes to know exactly what Shakespeare means. He turns to the note for enlightenment, and the enlightenment he gets is this :—

"*Enginer.* Changed in the quarto of 1676 to the more modern form of engineer. Compare *Troilus and Cressida* ii. 3. 8, "Then there's Achilles a rare enginer." For a cognate form mutiner see note on iii. 4. 83. So we have pioner for pioneer *Othello* iii. 3. 346. *Hoist* may be the participle either of the verb 'hoise' or 'hoist.' In the latter case it would be the common abbreviated form for the participles of verbs ending in a dental. *Petar.* So spelt in the quartos, and by all editors to Johnson, who writes 'petards.' In Cotgrave we have 'Petart: a Petard or Petarre; an Engine (made like a bell or morter) wherewith strong gates,' etc."—

And so the hungry sheep looks up and is not fed. Again, he finds—

"He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice,"

turns to the note, and reads :—

"*Polacks.* The quartos have 'pollax,' the two earliest folios read 'Pollax,' the third 'Polax,' the fourth 'Poleaxe.' Pope read 'Polack' and Malone 'Polacks.' The word occurs four times in *Hamlet.* For 'the sledded Polacks' Molke reads 'his leaded pole-axe.' But this would be an anti-climax, and the poet, having mentioned 'Norway' in the first clause, would certainly have told us with whom the 'parle' was held."

The poet Young noted how

"Commentators each dark passage shun,
And hold their farthing candles to the sun."

The Clarendon Press editors are certainly adepts in these accomplishments. Take one out of a myriad illustrations. The line in Act i. sc. 2, "The dead vast and middle of the night," is the signal for a note extending to twelve closely printed lines. "'Tis bitter cold, and I am sick

at heart," says Francisco. If any note were needed here, it might have been devoted to pointing out to tiros the fine subjective touch. The note is this :—

"*Bitter cold.* Here bitter is used adverbially to qualify the adjective 'cold.' So we have 'daring hardy' in *Richard II.* i. 3. 43. When the combination is likely to be misunderstood, modern editors generally put a hyphen between the two words. *Sick at heart.* So *Macbeth* v. 3. 19, 'I am sick at heart.' We have also in *Love's Labour's Lost* ii. 1. 185, 'sick at the heart,' and *Romeo and Juliet* iii. 3. 72, 'heart-sick groans.'"

Now let us see how the poor student fares when real difficulties occur. Every reader of Shakespeare is familiar with the corrupt passage, Act iv. sc. 1 :—

"The dram of eale
Doth all the noble substance of worth out
To his own scandal—

a passage which, as all Shakespearian scholars know, has been satisfactorily emended and explained. We turn to the notes for guidance, and find ourselves treated as poor Mrs. Quickly was treated by Falstaff, "fubbed off"—thus :—

"We leave this hopelessly corrupt passage as it stands in the two earliest quartos. The others read 'ease' for 'eale,' and modern writers have conjectured for the same word base, ill, bale, ale, evil, ail, vile, lead. For 'of a doubt' it has been proposed to substitute 'of worth out,' 'soul with doubt,' 'oft adopt,' 'oft work out,' 'of good out,' 'of worth dout,' 'often dout,' 'often doubt,' 'oft adoubt,' 'oft delase,' 'over-cloud,' 'of a pound,' and others."

This, it may be added, is the sort of stuff—*in-*

credibile dictu—that our children have to get by heart; for this Press, be it remembered, practically controls half the English Literature examinations in England. As students know quite well that nine examiners out of ten will set their questions from "the Clarendon Press notes," it is with "the Clarendon Press notes" that they are obliged to cram themselves. But to continue. Even a well-read man might be excused for not knowing the exact meaning of the following expression:—

> "They clepe us drunkards, and with *swinish phrase*
> *Soil our addition.*"

He turns to the notes, and having been briefly informed that *clepe* means "call," and *addition* "title," is left to flounder with what he can get out of—"Could Shakespeare have had in his mind any pun upon 'Sweyn,' which was a common name of the kings of Denmark?"

Another leading characteristic of the *genus* philologist, we mean the preposterous importance attached by them to the smallest trifles, finds ludicrous illustration in the following note:—

> "My father, in his habit, as he lived!"

exclaims Hamlet to his mother. This is the signal for:—

"There is supposed to be a difficulty in these words, because in the earlier scenes the Ghost is in his armour, to which the word 'habit' is regarded as inappropriate. In the earlier form of the play, as it appears in the quarto of 1603, the Ghost enters 'in his nightgowne,' and as the words 'in the

habit as he lived' occur in the corresponding passage of that edition, it is probable that on this occasion the Ghost appeared in the ordinary dress of the king, although this is not indicated in the stage directions of the other quartos or of the folios."

As a possible solution of this grave difficulty, we would suggest that, as the Ghost was undoubtedly in a very hot place, he might have found his nightgown less oppressive than his armour, and though it would certainly have been more decorous to have exchanged his nightgown for his uniform on revisiting the earth, yet, as the visit was to his wife, he thought perhaps less seriously about his apparel than our editors have done. We have nothing to warrant us in assuming that he was in his "ordinary dress." The choice must lie between the nightgown and the armour. But a truce to jesting.

If any one would understand the opacity and callousness which philological study induces, we would refer them to the note on Hamlet's last sublime words, "The rest is silence":—

"The quartos have 'Which have solicited, the rest is silence.' The folios, 'Which have solicited. The rest is silence.' O, O, O, O. *Dyes.*' If Hamlet's speech is interrupted by his death it would be more natural than the words 'The rest is silence' should be spoken by Horatio."

We said at the beginning of this article that there was not a word of commentary on the poetical merits of the play. We beg the editors' pardon. They have in one note, and in one

note only, ventured on an expression of critical opinion. We all know the lines—

> "There is a willow grows aslant a brook
> That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream,"

etc., etc. We transcribe the note on this passage that it may be a sign to all men of what Philology is able to effect, an omen and testimony of what must inevitably be the fate of Literature if the direction and regulation of its study be entrusted to philologists:—

> "This speech of the Queen is certainly unworthy of its author and of the occasion. The enumeration of plants is quite as unsuitable to so tragical a scene as the description of Dover cliff in *King Lear* iv. 6. 11–24. Besides there was no one by to witness the death of Ophelia, else she would have been rescued."

As this beggars commentary, transcription shall suffice.

Now we would ask any sensible person who has followed us, we do not say in our own remarks—for they may be supposed to be the expression of biassed opinion—but in the specimens we have given of such an edition as this of *Hamlet*, and of such an edition as we have just reviewed of *Adonais*, what is likely to be the fate of English Literature, as a subject of teaching, so long as our Universities ignore their responsibilities as the centres of culture by not only countenancing, but assisting in the production and dissemination of such publications as these? How can we expect anything but

anarchy wherever the subject is treated?—there an extreme of flaccid dilettantism, here an extreme of philological pedantry. Conceive the tone and temper which, especially at the impressionable age of the students for whom the book is intended, the study of Shakespeare, under such guides as the editors of this *Hamlet*, would be likely to induce. Is it not monstrous that young students between the ages of about fifteen and eighteen should have such text books as these inflicted on them?

The radical fault of those who regulate education in our Universities and elsewhere, and prescribe our schoolbooks, is their deplorable want of judgment. They seem to be utterly incapable of distinguishing between what is proper for pure specialists and what is proper for ordinary students. There is not a page in this edition which does not proclaim aloud, that it could never have been intended for the purposes to which it has been applied, that it is the work of technical scholars, concerned only in textual and philological criticism and exegesis, and appealing only to those who approach the study of Shakespeare in the same spirit and from the same point of view. Anything more sickening and depressing, anything more calculated to make the name of Shakespeare an abomination to the youth of England it would be impossible for man to devise. It is shameful to prescribe such books for study in our Schools and Educational Institutes.

OUR LITERARY GUIDES

I. A SHORT HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE [1]

THIS Short History is evidently designed for the use of serious readers, for the ordinary reader who will naturally look to it for general instruction and guidance in the study of English Literature, and to whom it will serve as a book of reference; for students in schools and colleges, to many of whom it will, in all likelihood, be prescribed as a textbook; for teachers engaged in lecturing and in preparing pupils for examination. Of all these readers there will not be one in a hundred who will not be obliged to take its statements on trust, to assume that its facts are correct, that its generalizations are sound, that its criticisms and critical theories are at any rate not absurd. It need hardly be said that, under these circumstances, a writer who had any pretension to conscientiousness would do his utmost to avoid all such errors as ordinary diligence could easily prevent, that he would guard scrupulously against random assertions and reckless misstate-

[1] *A Short History of English Literature.* By George Saintsbury, Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature in the University of Edinburgh.

ments, that he would, in other words, spare no pains to deserve the confidence placed in him by those who are not qualified to check his statements or question his dogmas, and who naturally suppose that the post which he occupies is a sufficient guarantee of the soundness and accuracy of his work. But so far from Professor Saintsbury having any sense of what is due to his position and to his readers, he has imported into his work the worst characteristics of irresponsible journalism: generalizations, the sole supports of which are audacious assertions, and an indifference to exactness and accuracy, as well with respect to important matters as in trifles, so scandalous as to be almost incredible.

Sir Thomas More said of Tyndale's version of the New Testament that to seek for errors in it was to look for drops of water in the sea. What was said very unfairly of Tyndale's work may be said with literal truth of Professor Saintsbury's. The utmost extent of the space at our disposal will only suffice for a few illustrations. We will select those which appear to us most typical. In the chapter on Anglo-Saxon literature the Professor favours us with the astounding statement, that in Anglo-Saxon poetry "there is practically no lyric."[1] It is scarcely necessary to say that not only does Anglo-Saxon poetry

[1] Page 37.

abound in lyrics, but that it is in its lyrical note that its chief power and charm consists. In the threnody of the *Ruin*, and the *Grave*, in the sentimental pathos of the *Seafarer*, of *Deor's Complaint*, and of the remarkable fragment describing the husband's pining for his wife, in the fiery passion of the three great war-songs, in the glowing subjective intensity of the *Judith*, in the religious ecstasy of the *Holy Rood* and of innumerable passages in the other poems attributed to Cynewulf, and of the poem attributed to Cædmon, deeper and more piercing lyric notes have never been struck. Take such a passage as the following from the *Satan*, typical, it may be added, of scores of others:—

"O thou glory of the Lord! Guardian of Heaven's hosts,
O thou might of the Creator! O thou mid-circle!
O thou bright day of splendour! O thou jubilee of God!
O ye hosts of angels! O thou highest heaven!
O that I am shut from the everlasting jubilee,
That I cannot reach my hands again to Heaven,
. . . Nor hear with my ears ever again
The clear-ringing harmony of the heavenly trumpets."[1]

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[1] Eá lâ drihtenes þrym! eá lâ duguða helm!
eá lâ meotodes miht! eá lâ middaneard!
eá lâ däg leóhta! eá lâ dreám godes!
eá lâ engla þreát! eá lâ upheofon!
eá lâ þät ic eam ealles leás êcan dreámes,
þät ic mid handum ne mäg heofon geræcan
ne mid eágum ne môt up lôcian
ne hûru mid eárum ne sceal æfre gehêran
þære byrhtestan bêman stefne.
—*Satan*. edit. Grein, 164–172.

And this is a poetry which has "practically no lyric"! On page 2 the Professor tells us that there is no rhyme in Anglo-Saxon poetry; on page 18 we find him giving an account of the rhyming poem in the *Exeter Book*. Of Mr. Saintsbury's method of dealing with particular works and particular authors, one or two examples must suffice. He tells us on page 125 that the heroines in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* are "the most hapless and blameless of Ovid's Heroides." It would be interesting to know what connexion Cleopatra, whose story comes first, has with Ovid's Heroides, or if the term "Heroides" be, as it appears to be, (for it is printed in italics) the title of Ovid's Heroic Epistles, what connexion four out of the ten have with Ovid's work. In any case the statement is partly erroneous and wholly misleading. In the account given of the Scotch poets, the Professor, speaking of Douglas' translation of the *Æneid*, says, he "does not embroider on his text." This is an excellent illustration of the confidence which may be placed in Mr. Saintsbury's assertions about works on which most of his readers must take what he says on trust. Douglas is continually "embroidering on his text," indeed, he habitually does so. We open his translation purely at random; we find him turning *Æneid* II. 496–499:—

> "Non sic, aggeribus ruptis cum spumeus amnis
> Exiit, oppositasque evicit gurgite moles,"

Fertur in arva furens cumulo, camposque per omnes
Cum stabulis armenta trahit.

Not sa fersly the fomy river or flude
Brekkis over the bankis on spait quhen it is wode.
And with his brusch and fard of water brown
The dykys and the schorys betis down,
Ourspreddand croftis and flattis wyth hys spate
Our all the feyldis that they may row ane bate
Quhill houssis and the flokkis flittis away,
The corne grangis and standard stakkys of hay."

We open *Æneid* IX. 2:—

"Irim de cœlo misit Saturnia Juno
Audacem ad Turnum. Luco tum forte parentis
Pilumni Turnus sacratâ valle sedebat.
Ad quem sic roseo Thaumantias ore locuta est."

We find it turned:—

"Juno that lyst not blyn
Of hir auld malyce and iniquyte,
Hir madyn Iris from hevin sendys sche
To the bald Turnus malapart and stout;
Quhilk for the tyme was wyth al his rout
Amyd ane vale wonnder lovn and law,
Syttand at eys within the hallowit schaw
Of God Pilumnus his progenitor.
Thamantis dochter knelys him before,
I meyn Iris thys ilk fornamyt maide,
And with hir rosy lippis thus him said."

We turn to the end of the tenth *Æneid* and we find him introducing six lines which have nothing to correspond with them in the original. And this is a translator who "does not embroider on his text"! It is perfectly plain that Professor Saintsbury has criticised and

commented on a work which he could never have inspected. The same ignorance is displayed in the account of Lydgate. He is pronounced to be a versifier rather than a poet, his verse is described as "sprawling and staggering." The truth is that Lydgate's style and verse are often of exquisite beauty, that he was a poet of fine genius, that his descriptions of nature almost rival Chaucer's, that his powers of pathos are of a high order, that, at his best, he is one of the most musical of poets. We have not space to illustrate what must be obvious to any one who has not gone to encyclopædias and handbooks for his knowledge of this poet's writings, but who is acquainted with the original. It will not be disputed that Gray and Warton were competent judges of these matters, and their verdict must be substituted for what we have not space to prove and illustrate. "I do not pretend," Gray says, "to set Lydgate on a level with his master Chaucer, but he certainly comes the nearest to him of any contemporary writer that I am acquainted with. His choice of expression and the smoothness of his verse far surpass both Gower and Occleve." Of one passage in Lydgate, Gray has observed that "it has touched the very heart strings of compassion with so masterly a hand as to merit a place among the greatest poets."[1] Warton also notices his "perspicuous and

[1] *Some Remarks on Lydgate.* Gray, Aldine Ed. v. 292–321.

musical numbers," and "the harmony, strength, and dignity" of his verses.[1]

Turn where we will we are confronted with blunders. Take the account given of Shakespeare. He began his metre, we are told, with the lumbering "fourteeners." He did, so far as is known, nothing of the kind. Again: "It is only by guesses that anything is dated before the *Comedy of Errors* at the extreme end of 1594." In answer to this it may be sufficient to say that *Venus and Adonis* was published in 1593, that the first part of *Henry VI.* was acted on 3rd March, 1592, that *Titus Andronicus* was acted on 25th January, 1594, and that *Lucrece* was entered on the Stationers' books 9th May, 1594. This is on a par with the assertion, on page 315, that Shakespeare was traditionally born on 24th April! On page 320 we are told that *Measure for Measure* belongs to the first group of Shakespeare's plays, to the series beginning with *Love's Labour's Lost* and culminating with the *Midsummer Night's Dream.* It

[1] That Lydgate's verse should occasionally be rough and halting is partly to be attributed to the wretched state in which his text has come down to us from the copyists, and partly to the arbitrary way in which he varies the accent. His heroic couplets in the *Storie of Thebes* are certainly very unmusical. For the whole question of his versification see Dr. Schick, Introduction to his edition of *The Temple of Glas*, pp. liv.–lxiii., and Schipper, *Altenglische Metrik*, 492–500. But neither of these scholars does justice to the exquisite music of his verse at its best.

is only fair to say that the Professor places a note of interrogation after it in a bracket, but that it should have been placed there, even tentatively, shows an ignorance of the very rudiments of Shakespearian criticism which is nothing short of astounding. Take, again, the account given of Burke. Our readers will probably think us jesting when we tell them that Professor Saintsbury gravely informs us that Burke supported the American Revolution. Is the Professor unacquainted with the two finest speeches which have ever been delivered in any language since Cicero? Can he possibly be ignorant that Burke, so far from supporting that revolution, did all in his power to prevent it? The whole account of Burke, it may be added, teems with inaccuracies. The American Revolution was not brought about under a Tory administration. What brought that revolution about was Charles Townshend's tax, and that tax was imposed under a Whig administration, as every well-informed Board-school lad would know. Burke did not lose his seat at Bristol owing to his support of Roman Catholic claims. If Professor Saintsbury had turned to one of the finest of Burke's minor speeches—the speech addressed to the electors of Bristol—he would have seen that Burke's support of the Roman Catholic claims was only one, and that not the most important, of the causes which cost him his seat. Similar ignorance is displayed in

the remark (p. 629) that "Burke joined, and indeed headed, the crusade against Warren Hastings, in 1788." The prosecution of Warren Hastings was undertaken on Burke's sole initiative, not in 1788, but in 1785. A few lines onwards we are told that the series of Burke's writings on the French Revolution "began with the *Reflections* in 1790, and was continued in the *Letter to a Noble Lord*, 1790. *A Letter to a Noble Lord* had nothing to do with the French Revolution, except collaterally as it affected Burke's public conduct, and appeared, not in 1790, but in 1795.

It seems impossible to open this book anywhere without alighting on some blunder, or on some inaccuracy. Speaking (p. 277) of Willoughby's well-known *Avisa*, the Professor observes that nothing is known of Willoughby or of *Avisa*. If the Professor had known anything about the work, he would have known that *Avisa* is simply an anagram made up of the initial letters of *Amans, vxor, inviolata semper amanda*, and that nothing is known of *Avisa* for the simple reason that nothing is known of the site of More's Utopia. On page 360 we are told that Phineas Fletcher's *Piscatory Eclogues*, which are, of course, confounded with his *Sicelides*, are a masque ; on page 624, but this is perhaps a printer's error, that Robertson wrote a history of Charles I. On page 482, John Pomfret, the author of one of the most popular poems of the eighteenth cen-

tury, is called Thomas. On page 550, Pope's *Moral Essays* are described as *An Epistle to Lord Burlington*, presumably because the last of them, the fourth, is addressed to that nobleman. On page 587 we are told that Mickle died in London: he died at Forest Hill, near Oxford. On page 556 we are informed that Prior was part author of a parody of the "Hind and Panther," and that he was "imprisoned for some years." The work referred to is wrongly described, as it only contained parodies of certain passages in Dryden's poem, and he was in confinement less than two years. On page 358, Brutus, the legendary founder of Britain, is actually described as the son of Æneas. If Professor Saintsbury were as familiar as he affects to be with Geoffrey of Monmouth, with Layamon and with the early metrical romances, he would have known that Brutus is fabled to have been the son of Sylvius, the son of Ascanius, and, consequently, the great-grandson of Æneas. Many of the Professor's critical remarks can only be explained on the supposition that he assumes that his readers will not take the trouble to verify his references or question his dogmas. We will give one or two instances. On page 468, speaking of seventeenth-century prose, he says, with reference to Milton: "The close of the *Apology* itself is a very little, though only a very little, inferior to the *Hydriotaphia*." By the *Apology* he can only mean the *Apology for*

Smectymnuus, for the defence of the English people is in Latin. Now, will our readers credit that one of the flattest, clumsiest and most commonplace passages in Milton's prose writings, as any one may see who turns to it, is pronounced "only a little inferior" to one of the most majestically eloquent passages in our prose literature. That our readers may know what Professor Saintsbury's notions of eloquence are, we will transcribe the passage:

"Thus ye have heard, readers, how many shifts and wiles the prelates have invented to save their ill-got booty. And if it be true, as in Scripture it is foretold, that pride and covetousness are the sure marks of those false prophets which are to come, then boldly conclude these to be as great seducers as any of the latter times. For between this and the judgment day do not look for any arch deceivers who, in spite of reformation, will use more craft or less shame to defend their love of the world and their ambition than these prelates have done. And if ye think that soundness of reason or what force of argument so ever shall bring them to an ingenuous silence, ye think that which shall never be. But if ye take that course which Erasmus was wont to say Luther took against the pope and monks: if ye denounce war against their riches and their bellies, ye shall soon discern that turban of pride which they wear upon their heads to be no helmet of salvation, but the mere metal and hornwork of papal jurisdiction; and that they have also this gift, like a certain kind of some that are possessed, to have their voice in their bellies, which, being well drained and taken down, their great oracle, which is only there, will soon be dumb, and the divine right of episcopacy forthwith expiring will put us no more to trouble with tedious antiquities and disputes."

And this is "a very little, only a very little, inferior," to the "Hydriotaphia"!

On page 652, Swift's style, that perfection of simple, unadorned *sermo pedestris*—is described as marked by "volcanic magnificence." On page 300 Hooker is described as "having an unnecessary fear of vivid and vernacular expression." Vivid and vernacular expression is, next to its stateliness, the distinguishing characteristic of Hooker's style. It would be interesting to know what is meant by the remark on page 445 that Barrow's style is "less severe than South's." Another example of the same thing is the assertion on page 517 that Joseph Glanville is one of "the chief exponents of the gorgeous style in the seventeenth century." Very 'gorgeous' the style of the *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, of its later edition the *Scepsis Scientifica*, of the *Sadducismus Triumphatus*, of the *Lux Orientalis*, and of the Essays!

Indeed, the Professor's critical dicta are as amazing as his facts. We have only space for one or two samples. Cowley's *Anacreontics* are "not very far below Milton" (!) Dr. Donne was "the most gifted man of letters next to Shakespeare." Where Bacon, where Ben Jonson, where Milton are to stand is not indicated. Akenside's stilted and frigid *Odes* "fall not so far short of Collins." We wonder what Mr. Saintsbury's criterion of poetry can be. But we forget, with that criterion he has furnished us. On page 732, speaking of "a story about a

hearer who knew no English, but knew Tennyson to be a poet by the hearing," he adds that "the story is probable and valuable, or rather invaluable, for it points to the best if not the only criterion of poetry." And this is a critic! We would exhort the Professor to ponder well Pope's lines:

> "But most by numbers judge a poet's song,
> * * * * *
> In the bright muse, tho' thousand charms conspire,
> Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire,
> Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear."

On page 734 we are told Browning's *James Lee*—the Professor probably means *James Lee's Wife*—is amongst "the greatest poems of the century." On Wordsworth's line, judged not in relation to its context, but as a single verse—"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting"—we have the following as commentary: "Even Shakespeare, even Shelley have little more of the echoing detonation, the auroral light of true poetry"; very "echoing," very "detonating"—the rhythm of "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting." Mr. Saintsbury's notions of what constitutes detonation and auroral light in poetry appear to resemble his notions of what constitutes eloquence in prose. Nothing, we may add in passing, is more amusing in this volume than Mr. Saintsbury's cool assumption of equality as a critical authority with such a critic as

Matthew Arnold, whom he sometimes patronises, sometimes corrects, and sometimes assails. The Professor does not show to advantage on these occasions, and he leaves us with the impression that if "Mr. Arnold's criticism is piecemeal, arbitrary, fantastic, and insane," the criticism which appears, where it is not mere nonsense, to take its touchstones, its standards, and its canons from those of the average Philistine is, after all, a very poor substitute. But enough of Mr. Saintsbury's "criticism," which is, almost uniformly, as absurd in what it praises as in what it censures.

The style, or, to borrow an expression from Swift, what the poverty of our language compels us to call the style, in which this book is written, is on a par with its criticism. We will give a few examples. "It is a proof of the greatness of Dryden that he knew Milton for a poet; it is a proof of the smallness (and mighty as he was on some sides, on others he was very small) of Milton that (if he really did so) he denied poetry to Dryden."[1] "What the *Voyage and Travaile* really is, is this—it is, so far as we know, and even beyond our knowledge in all probability and likelihood, the first considerable example of prose in English dealing neither with the beaten track of theology and philosophy, nor with the, even in the Middle Ages, restricted field of history and

[1] Page 474.

home topography, but expatiating freely on unguarded plains and on untrodden hills, sometimes dropping into actual prose romance and always treating its subject as the poets had treated theirs in *Brut* and *Mort d'Arthur*, in *Troy-book* and *Alexandreid*, as a mere canvas on which to embroider flowers of fancy."[1] Again, "With Anglo-Saxon history he deals slightly, and despite his ardent English patriotism—his book opens with a vigorous panegyric of England, the first of a series extending to the present day (from which an anthology *De Laudibus Angliæ* might be made) — he deals very harshly with Harold Godwinson."[2] "He had a fit of stiff Odes in the Gray and Collins manner." "*The Hind and Panther* (the greatest poem ever written in the teeth of its subject"). "His voluminous Latin works have been *tackled* by a special Wyclif Society." These are a few of the gems in which every chapter abounds.

Of Professor Saintsbury's indifference to exactness and accuracy in details and facts we need go no further for illustrations than to his dates. Such things cannot be regarded as trifles in a book designed to be a book of reference. We will give a few instances. We are informed on page 238 that Ascham's *Schoolmaster* was published in 1568; it was published, as its title-page shows, in 1570. Hume's *Dissertations* were

[1] Page 150. [2] Page 63.

first published, not in 1762, but in 1757. Bale's flight to Germany was not in 1547, when such a step would have been unnecessary, but in 1540. Pecock was, we are told, translated to Chichester in 1550, exactly ninety years after his death! As if to perplex the readers of this book, two series of dates are given; we have the dates in the narrative and the dates in the index, and no attempt is made to reconcile the discrepancies. Accordingly we find in the narrative that Caxton was probably born in 1415—in the index that he was born in 1422; in the narrative that Latimer, Fisher, Gascoign and Atterbury were born respectively in 1489, in 1465, about 1537 and in 1672—in the index that they were born respectively in 1485, 1459, 1525 and 1662; in the narrative Gay was born in 1688—in the index he was born in 1685. In the narrative Collins dies in 1756, and Mrs. Browning is born in 1806—in the index Collins dies in 1759, and Mrs. Browning is born in 1809. The narrative tells us that Aubrey was born in 1626, and John Dyer *circa* 1688—in the index that Aubrey was born in 1624 and Dyer *circa* 1700. In the index Mark Pattison dies in 1884—in the narrative he dies in 1889. In Professor Saintsbury's eyes such indifference to accuracy may be venial: in our opinion it is nothing less than scandalous. It is assuredly most unfair to those who will naturally expect to find in a book of reference trustworthy information.

We must now conclude, though we have very far from exhausted the list of errors and misstatements, of absurdities in criticism and absurdities in theory, which we have noted. Bacon has observed that the best part of beauty is that which a picture cannot express. It may be said, with equal truth, of a bad book, that what is worst in it is precisely that which it is most difficult to submit to tangible tests. In other words, it lies not so much in its errors and inaccuracies, which, after all, may be mere trifles and excrescences, but it lies in its tone and colour, its flavour, its accent. Professor Saintsbury appears to be constitutionally incapable of distinguishing vulgarity and coarseness from liveliness and vigour. So far from having any pretension to the finer qualities of the critic, he seems to take a boisterous pride in exhibiting his grossness.

If our review of this book shall seem unduly harsh, we are sorry, but a more exasperating writer than Professor Saintsbury, with his indifference to all that should be dear to a scholar, the mingled coarseness, triviality and dogmatism of his tone, the audacious nonsense of his generalisations, and the offensive vulgarity of his diction and style—a very well of English defiled—we have never had the misfortune to meet with. Turn where we will in this work, to the opinions expressed in it, to the sentiments, to the verdicts, to the style, the note is the same,—the note of the *Das Gemeine.*

OUR LITERARY GUIDES

II. A SHORT HISTORY OF MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE[1]

THE author of this work has plainly not pondered the advice of Horace, "Sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, æquam viribus." His ambitious purpose is "to give the reader, whether familiar with books or not, a feeling of the evolution of English Literature in the primary sense of the term," and he adds that "to do this without relation to particular authors and particular works seems to me impossible." This may be conceded; for, a feeling of the evolution of English or of any other literature, without reference to particular authors and particular books, would be analogous to the capacity for feeling without anything to feel. But, unfortunately, those of Mr. Gosse's readers who wish to have the feeling to which he refers will merely find the conditions without which, as he so justly observes, the said feeling is impossible.

[1] *A Short History of Modern English Literature.* By Edmund Gosse. London, 1898.

In other words, references, in the form of loose and desultory gossip, to particular authors and particular works chronologically arranged, are all that represent the "evolution" of which he is so anxious "to give a feeling."

Described simply, the work is an ordinary manual of English Literature in which, with Mr. Humphry Ward's *English Poets*, Sir Henry Craik's *English Prose Writers*, Chambers' *Cyclopædia of English Literature*, the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and the like before him, the writer tells again the not unfamiliar story of the course of our Literature from Chaucer to the present time. But Mr. Gosse is no mere compiler, and brings to his task certain qualifications of his own, a vague and inaccurate but extensive knowledge of our seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century Belles Lettres; and here, as a rule, he can acquit himself creditably. Though far from a sound, he is a sympathetic critic; he has an agreeable but somewhat affected style, and can gossip pleasantly and plausibly about subjects which are within the range indicated. But at this point, as is painfully apparent, his qualifications for being an historian and critic of English Literature end. The moment he steps out of this area he is at the mercy of his handbooks; so completely at their mercy that he does not even know how to use them. And it is here that Mr. Gosse becomes so irritating, partly be-

cause of the sheer audacity with which mere inferences are substituted for facts and simple assumptions for deduced generalizations, and partly because of the habitual employment of phraseology so vague and indeterminate that it is difficult to submit what it conveys to positive test. These are serious charges to bring against any writer ; and if they cannot be abundantly substantiated, a still more serious charge may justly be urged against the accuser.

To turn to the work. On page 85 Mr. Gosse favours us with the following account of the *Faerie Queene*: "A certain grandeur which sustains the three great Cantos of Truth, Temperance, and Chastity fades away as we proceed. . . . The structure of it is loose and incoherent when we compare it with the epic grandeur of the masterpieces of Ariosto and Tasso." It would be difficult to match this; every word which is not a blunder is an absurdity. Where are "the three great Cantos"? Can Mr. Gosse possibly be ignorant that the poem is divided into books, each book containing twelve Cantos? Assuming, however, that he has confounded books with Cantos, where is the great book dealing with 'Truth'? As he places it before 'Temperance,' we presume that he means the first book and that he has confounded 'Truth' with 'Holiness.' This is pretty well, to begin with. Where, we next ask in amazement, is the 'grandeur' which sustains the prolix farrago of the third book, and which 'fades

away' as we proceed to the only book which almost rivals the first and second, the fifth, and the sublimest portion of the whole work, the superb Cantos which represent all that remains of the seventh? What, we gasp, is the meaning of the 'epic grandeur' of Ariosto? and "the loose and incoherent structure" of the *Faerie Queene* when compared with that of the *Orlando Furioso*? Could any poem be more loose and incoherent in structure than the *Orlando*, or any term be less appropriate to its tone and style than 'grandeur'? On page 80 he actually tells us that Fox's well-known *Book of Martyrs* was written in Latin and translated by John Day, and that it is John Day's translation of the Latin original which represents that work, confounding Fox's *Commentarii Rerum in Ecclesiâ gestarum*, etc., printed at Basil with the *Acts and Monuments of the Church*, and making John Day, the publisher of it, the translator of it into English! And this is his account of one of the most celebrated works in our language. Of Swift's *Sentiments of a Church of England Man*, we have the following account: "That such a tract as the *Sentiments of a Church of England Man*, with its gusts of irony, its white heat of preposterous moderation, led on towards Junius is obvious." This is an excellent example of the confidence which may be placed in Mr. Gosse's assertions. Of this pamphlet, it may be sufficient to say that there

is not a single touch of irony or satire in it; that it stands almost alone among Swift's tracts for its perfectly temperate and logical tone; it is a calm appeal to pure reason. There is the same audacity of assertion in classing Feltham's *Resolves* with Hall's and Overbury's Character Sketches, and Earle's *Microcosmogonie* as "a typical example" of "a curious school of comic or ironic portraiture, partly ethical and partly dramatic." In 1625, we are told that Bacon completed the *Sylva Sylvarum.* If Mr. Gosse knew anything of Bacon's philosophical writings, he would have known that the *Sylva Sylvarum* never was and never could have been completed, for it was in itself a fragment—a mere collection of materials to be incorporated in the *Phœnomena Universi*, a work which was to have been six times larger than Pliny's *Natural History.* In giving an account of Tillotson, he speaks of "the serene and insinuating periods" of the elegant latitudinarian who "was assiduous in saying what he had to say in the most graceful and intelligible manner possible." A more perfect description of the very opposite of Tillotson's style could hardly be given. Those who are acquainted with Fuller's writings will be equally surprised to find him classed with Jeremy Taylor and Henry More, and to learn that his style is 'florid and involved,' distinguished by its 'long-windedness' and 'exuberance.' Has Mr. Gosse no apprehension of his readers turning to

the originals and testing his statements? We have another of these bold assertions in the account of Lydgate, derived, we suspect, from a hasty generalization from a remark made about him in Mr. Ward's *British Poets*. "Lydgate," says Mr. Gosse, "had a most defective ear; his verses are not to be scanned. His ear was bad and tuneless." Any one who has read Lydgate knows that, if we except his heroic couplets, a more musical poet is not to be found in the fifteenth century, or, indeed, in our language; the softness and smoothness of his verse, wherever he writes in stanzas, as he generally does, is indeed his chief characteristic. These remarks are minor illustrations of an accomplishment in which Mr. Gosse has no rival.

The Euphuists of the sixteenth century drew, for purposes of simile and illustration, on a fabulous natural history which assumed the existence of certain animals, herbs, and minerals, and of certain properties and qualities possessed by them. This gave great point and picturesqueness to their style, and though it was certainly misleading and occasionally perplexing to those who went to them for natural history, it had a most charming and imposing effect. Mr. Gosse seems to have imported a similar fiction into criticism. Of this we have a most amusing illustration on page 155. Speaking

of Herrick Mr. Gosse remarks, "In the midst of these extravagances, like Meleager winding his *pure white violets*"—the Italics are ours—"into the *gaudy garland of late Greek Euphuism,* we find Robert Herrick." Meleager's Anthology is not extant, but the dedication is, and from that dedication we know exactly from what poets it was compiled. It ranged from about B.C. 700 till towards the close of the Alexandrian Age, for, with the exception of Antipater of Sidon, it is very doubtful whether he inserted any epigrams by his contemporaries, but he admitted a hundred and thirty-one of his own. In other words his collection comprised epigrams composed by the masters preceding the Alexandrian Age from Archilochus downwards, and by those who, during that age and afterwards, cultivated with scrupulous care the simplicity and purity of the early models. Indeed, the poets represented in his Anthology are, with one exception, the artists of Greek epigram in its purest, simplest, and chastest form. That one exception is himself. In him are first apparent the *dulcia vitia* of the Decadence; he is full of dainty subtleties, he is almost more Oriental than Greek, his style is luscious, elaborate and florid. Such, then, was the composition of "the gaudy garland of late Greek Euphuism," and such the nature of the "pure

white violets" wound into it by Meleager. It is amusing to trace Mr. Gosse's rodomontade to its source. In the well-known dedication to which we have referred, Meleager prettily compares the various poets, from whose works he selects, to flowers, speaking modestly of his own contributions as "early white violets." To critics like Mr. Gosse the rest is easy. Meleager, he no doubt argued, was an excellent poet; he belonged to a late age: 'Euphuism'—a delightfully vague term, is likely to characterise a late age; a poet who compares his verses to white violets had evidently a taste for simplicity, and presumably, therefore, was no Euphuist; a gaudy garland is an excellent set off for pure white violets. And so, to the great perplexity of scholars, but to the great satisfaction of those who enjoy a pretty sentence, Meleager will continue "to wind his pure white violets into the gaudy garland of late Greek Euphuism."

We have a similar illustration of the same thing in Mr. Gosse's account of Shaftesbury. We are told that he "was perhaps the greatest literary force between Dryden and Swift"; that "he deserves remembrance as the first who really broke down the barrier which excluded England from taking her proper place in the civilization of literary Europe"; that "he set an example for the kind of prose which was

to mark the central years of the century"; that "his style glitters and rings, and . . . yet so curious that one marvels that it should have fallen completely into neglect"; that "he was the first Englishman who developed theories of formal virtue, who attempted to harmonize the beautiful with the true and the good"; that the modern attitude of mind seems to meet us first in the graceful cosmopolitan writings of Shaftesbury; that "without a Shaftesbury there would hardly have been a Ruskin or a Pater." Such amazing nonsense almost confounds refutation by its sheer absurdity.

With regard to the first statement, it may be sufficient to say that between the period of Dryden's literary activity and the publication of Swift's *Battle of the Books* and *Tale of a Tub* were flourishing Hobbes, Izaak Walton, Bunyan, Temple, and Locke; that between the publication of the *Tale of a Tub* and of Shaftesbury's collected writings were flourishing Addison, Steele, De Foe, Arbuthnot, Berkeley. With regard to the second statement, it would be interesting to know how a writer who had been preceded by Bacon, Hobbes and Locke, could be described as a writer who had been the first "to break down the barrier which excluded England from taking her proper place in the civilization of literary Europe." The truth is, that Shaftesbury exercised no influence at all

on Continental Literature until long after our Literature had generally become influential in France. Equally absurd and baseless is the remark that he "set an example of the kind of prose that was to mark the central years of the century." Whose prose was affected by him? Bolingbroke's? or Fielding's? or Richardson's? or Middleton's? or Johnson's? or Goldsmith's? or Hume's? or Hawkesworth's? or Sterne's? or Smollett's? or Chesterfield's? that of the writers in the *Monthly Review*? or in the *Adventurer*? or in the *World*? or in the *Connoisseur*? To say of Shaftesbury's style that "it glitters and rings," is to say what betrays utter ignorance of its characteristics. As a rule, it is diffuse, involved, and cumbrous, affected, but with an affectation which sedulously aims at the very opposite effects of "glittering and ringing." When he is eloquent, as in the *Moralists*, he imitates the style of Plato; his vice is florid verbosity; it may be doubted whether a single sentence could be found to which Mr. Gosse's description would be applicable. If, it may be added, his style had "fallen completely into neglect," it is somewhat surprising that "he should set an example for the kind of prose which was to mark the central years of the century." When we are told that he was "the first Englishman who attempted to harmonize the beautiful with the true and the good," we ask in amazement whether Mr. Gosse has ever inspected the *Hymns* of Spenser and

the writings of the Cambridge Platonists; and when he tells us that without a Shaftesbury there would hardly have been a Ruskin or a Pater, we would suggest to him that both Ruskin and Pater were perhaps not ignorant of the Platonic Dialogues. In the account given of Spenser, a poem is attributed to him which he never wrote. "In one of his early pieces, *The Oak and The Briar*, went far," etc., the oak and the briar is simply an episode in the second eclogue of the *Shepherd's Calendar*. Mr. Gosse, probably finding it quoted in some book of selections, has jumped to the conclusion that it is a separate poem. Of Mr. Gosse's qualifications for dealing with Spenser, we have, by the way, an excellent example in the following remark: "Spenser, although he boasted of his classical acquirements, was singularly little affected by Greek or even Latin ideas." Spenser's *Hymns* in honour of Love and in Honour of Beauty are simply saturated with Platonism, being indeed directly derived from the *Phædrus* and the *Symposium*, numberless passages from which are interwoven with the poems. The whole scheme of the *Faerie Queene* was suggested by, and based on, Aristotle's *Ethics* with elaborate particularity, Arthur, in his relation to the several knights, corresponding to the virtue *μεγαλοψυχία* in its relation to the other virtues. The conclusion of the tenth canto of the first book is simply an allegorical presentation of the

relation of the *βίος θεωρητικὸς* to practical life. The "Castle of Medina" in the second book is a minutely technical exposition of the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, modified by the Platonic theory of morals: the three mothers being the *λογιστική*, the *ἐπιθυμητική*, and *θυμητική*, the three daughters, Elissa, Perissa, and Medina, being respectively the Aristotelian *ἔλλειψις*, the *ὑπερβολή*, and the *μεσότης*. In fact, the whole passage is simply an allegory of the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean. The whole of the ninth canto of the second book is founded on the famous passage in the *Timæus* describing the anatomy of man. In truth the poem teems with references to Plato and Aristotle, and with passages imitated from the Greek poets, as every scholar knows. And this is a poet "singularly little affected by Greek ideas!"

The same astonishing ignorance is displayed in a remark about Milton. We are told that in his youth he was "slightly subjected to influence from Spenser." If Mr. Gosse had any adequate acquaintance with Milton and Spenser, he would have known that Spenser was to Milton almost what Homer was to Virgil, that Spenser's influence simply pervades his poems, not his youthful poems only, but *Paradise Lost* and even *Paradise Regained.* On page 194 we find this sentence: "From 1660 onwards . . . what France originally, and then England, chose was the *imitatio veterum*, the Literature

in prose and verse which seemed most closely to copy the models of Latin style. Aristotle and Horace were taken, not merely as patterns, but as arbiters." It would be very interesting to know what English author took Aristotle as a pattern for style. Is Mr. Gosse acquainted with the characteristics of Aristotle's style? Should he ever become so, he will probably have some sense of the immeasurable absurdity of asserting that our prose writers from 1660 onwards took that style for their model. On a par with this is the assertion that up to 1605 Bacon had mainly issued his works in "Ciceronian Latin." Is Mr. Gosse aware of the meaning of "Ciceronian Latin"? Very "Ciceronian" indeed is Bacon's Latinity, and particularly that of the *Meditationes Sacræ*, the only work published in Latin by Bacon up to 1605! It is scarcely necessary to say, in passing, that such works as Bacon had published up to 1605 were, with the one exception referred to, all in English. Nothing, it may be added, is so annoying in this book as its slushy dilettantism. Mr. Gosse appears to be incapable of accuracy and precision. Thus he tells us that Chaucer's expedition to Italy in 1372 was "the first of several Italian expeditions." Chaucer, so far as is known, visited Italy, after this, exactly once. Again, he tells us that the *Complaint of Mars* and the *Parliament of Fowls* are interesting as showing that Chaucer had completely abandoned

his imitation of French models. Chaucer wrote several poems in the pure French style, and based on French models, after the date of these poems. Such would be the Rondel *Merciless Beauty* suggested by Williamme d'Amiens, the *Compleynt of Venus*, partly adapted and partly translated from three Ballades by Sir Otes de Graunson, and the *Compleynt to his Empty Purse*, modelled on a Ballade by Eustache Deschamps, while French influence continued to modify his work throughout. On page 238 we are told that Thomson revived the Spenserian stanza; it had been revived by Pope, Prior, Shenstone, and Akenside. On page 151 we are informed that the first instalment of Clarendon's History remained unprinted till 1752, and the rest of it till 1759. If Mr. Gosse knew anything about one of the most remarkable controversies of the eighteenth century, he would have known that the greater part of it was printed and published between 1702 and 1704, and frequently reprinted between 1704 and 1731.

There is not a chapter in the book which does not teem with errors. Trissino's *Sofonisba* was not the only work in which blank verse had attained any prominence in Italy about 1515; it had been employed in works equally prominent, by Rucellai in his *Rosmunda*, and in his *Oreste*, as well as in his didactic poem *L'Api*, and by Alamanni in his *Antigone*, all

of which were composed within a few years of that date. On page 120 we are told that Davies was the first to employ, on a long flight, the heroic quatrain; it had been employed by Spenser in a poem extending to nearly a thousand lines. Nor was Surrey's essay in *terza rima* "the earliest in the language." Chaucer made the same experiment, though a little irregularly, in the *Compleynt to his Lady.* We are told on page 79 that Gascoigne was "the first translator of Greek tragedy." Gascoigne never translated a line from the Greek. His *Jocasta*, to which presumably the reference is made, is simply an adaptation of Ludovico Dolce's *Giocasta.* On page 25 we are informed that "Gower's French verse has mainly disappeared." Gower is not known to have written anything in French except the *Ballades* and the *Speculum Meditantis,* both of which are extant, as it is inexcusable in any historian of English Literature not to know. The account given on page 25 of the *Confessio Amantis* shows that Mr. Gosse is very imperfectly acquainted with what he so fluently criticises, or he would have been aware that the seventh book is purely episodical and has nothing whatever to do with "The lover's symptoms and experience." In the account of Pope we are informed that "Boileau discouraged love poetry and Pope did not seriously

attempt it." Pope is the author of the most famous love poem in the eighteenth century, *Eloisa to Abelard*, to say nothing of the *Elegy to an Unfortunate Lady*, of the beautiful hymn to Love in the second chorus in the tragedy of *Brutus*, and the exquisite fragment supposed to have been addressed to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. "The satires of Pope," he continues, "would not have been written but for those of his French predecessor." Can Mr. Gosse possibly be ignorant that the satires of Pope are modelled on the Satires and Epistles of Horace, that they owe absolutely nothing to Boileau, not even the hint for applying Roman satire to modern times, as he had precedents in his own countrymen Dryden and Rochester?

Mr. Gosse's criticism is often very amusing, as here, speaking of Gibbon: "Perhaps he leaned on the strength of his style too much, and *sacrificed the abstract to the concrete*." Of all historians who have ever lived, Gibbon is the most "abstract" and has most sacrificed the "concrete" to the "abstract," as every student of history knows. On a par with this is the prodigious statement (p. 291) that there is "an absence of emotional imagination" in Burke! That excellent man, Mr. Pecksniff, was, we are told, in the habit of using any word that occurred to him as having a fine sound and rounding a sentence well, without much care for its meaning; "and this," says his biographer

"he did so boldly and in such an imposing manner that he would sometimes stagger the wisest people and make them gasp again." This is precisely Mr. Gosse's method. About the propriety of his epithets and statements, so long as they sound well, he never troubles himself; sometimes they are so vague as to mean anything, as often they have no meaning at all, as here: "His [that is Shelley's] style, carefully considered, is seen to rest on a basis built about 1760, from which it is every moment springing and sparkling, like a fountain, in columns of ebullient lyricism." Could pure nonsense go further? We have another illustration of the same audacity of absurd assertion on page 260. We are there informed—Mr. Gosse is speaking of our prose literature about the centre of the eighteenth century—that "Philosophy by this time had become detached from *belles lettres*; it was now quite indifferent to those who practised it, whether their sentences were harmonious or no. . . . Philosophy in fact quitted literature." If there was any period in our prose literature when philosophy was in the closest alliance with belles lettres, and was most studious of the graces of style, it was between about 1750 and 1771. In those years appeared Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy*, Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, one of the most eloquent philosophical treatises ever written, Burke's *Treatise on the Sublime and*

Beautiful, Reid's *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, Tucker's *Light of Nature Pursued*, Beattie's *Essay on Truth*, to say nothing of Hume's *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, his *Political Discourses*, and his *Natural History of Religion*, all of them works pre-eminently distinguished by the graces of style, while so far from philosophy quitting belles lettres, it was during these years that the foundations of philosophical criticism were laid by Burke, Harris, Hurd, Kames, and others. Mr. Gosse appears to have forgotten that he had himself told us (p. 205) that Shaftesbury's style set the example of the prose which was to mark the central years of the century! Thus again Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* is "an entertaining neurotic compendium"; Bacon's *Essays* are "often mere notations . . . enlarged in many cases merely to receive the impressions of a Machiavellian ingenuity." Shelley's *Triumph of Life* is "a noble but vague gnomic poem, in which Petrarch's Trionfi are summed up and sometimes excelled." Keats' "great odes are Titanic and Titianic." On page 284 we are informed that for fifteen years after the close of 1800 "poetry may be said to have been stationary in England." When we remember that within these years appeared the best of Wordsworth's poems, the best of Coleridge's, the best of Scott's, the best of Crabbe's, the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, the best of Campbell's, the best

of Moore's, and of Southey's—we wonder what can be meant, till we read on to find that it was "on the contrary extremely active." But "its activity took the form of the gradual acceptance of the new romantic ideas, the slow expulsion of the old classic taste, and the multiplication of examples of what had once for all been supremely accomplished in the hollows of the Quantocks." In other words, its activity took the form of its activity, and its activity led to its becoming stationary. Mr. Gosse is sometimes solemnly oracular, as here: "It is a sentimental error to suppose that the winds of God blow only through the green tree; it is sometimes the dry tree which is peculiarly favourable to their passage." It is not sometimes, we submit, but always that the dry tree will be most propitious to their passage. But we like Mr. Gosse best when he is eloquent, as here: "In the chapel of Milton's brain, entirely devoted though it was to a Biblical form of worship, there were flutes and trumpets to accompany one vast commanding organ." No wonder poor Milton suffered, as we know he did suffer, from insomnia!

The statement that "so miserable is the poverty of the first half of the seventeenth century, when we have mentioned Pecock and Capgrave, there is no other prose writer to be named," is bad enough. But to sum up Pecock's work with the remark, "the matter is paradoxi-

cal and casuistical reasoning on controversial points, in which he secures the sympathy neither of the new thought nor the old," is to demonstrate that Mr. Gosse knows nothing whatever about it. The *Repressor* is in many important respects one of the most remarkable works in our early prose Literature. It would be interesting to know what is the meaning of the following: "The masterpiece of Chillingworth stands almost alone in a sort of underwood of Theophrastian character sketches." Does Mr. Gosse suppose that English prose Literature in and about 1637 is represented by Hall's *Characters of Vices and Virtues*, by Sir Thomas Overbury's *Characters*, and by Earle's *Microcosmographie*, which appeared respectively, not in and about 1637, but in 1608, in 1614, and in 1628? If this was the underwood in which Chillingworth's work stood, it stood also in a dense forest represented by some of the most celebrated prose writings of the seventeenth century, such as the greater part of the writings of Bacon and of Raleigh, the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Selden's *Titles of Honour* and *Mare Clausum*, Lord Herbert of Cherbury's *De Veritate*, Feltham's *Resolves*, the best of Hall's writings, Purchas' *Pilgrims*, Barclay's *Argenis*, the Histories of Speed, Stowe, Hayward, and Raleigh, Heylin's *Microcosmus*, Prynne's *Histrio-Mastix*, and the famous sermons of Lancelot Andrewes, all of which appeared between 1608 and 1637. These are the sort of

remarks in which Mr. Gosse habitually indulges. We have another example in the following: "Shelley's attitude to style is in the main retrograde," a generalization based on the fact that he was no admirer of "the arabesque of the cockney school." But were Shelley's chief contemporaries admirers of the arabesque of the cockney school, or were they affected by it? Was Wordsworth, was Coleridge, or Southey, or Byron, or Crabbe, or Campbell, or Landor? —a question which Mr. Gosse probably never stopped to ask himself. On a par with this is the absurd assertion that "English poetry was born again during the autumn months of 1797." The appearance of the *Lyrical Ballads* did not make, but mark, an era in our poetry. The revolution of which they were the expression had been maturing, as surely but distinctly as the social and political revolution marked by the assembly of the States-General ten years before. There was hardly a note struck in the *Lyrical Ballads* which had not been struck in our poetry between 1740 and the date of their appearance.

To call this compilation a *History of Modern English Literature* is ludicrous. Mr. Gosse has no conception even of the eras into which our Literature naturally falls, or of the movements which in each of those eras defined themselves. Nothing could be more misleading and inadequate than the accounts given of the historians, theo-

logians, philosophers, and critics, many of whom —nay, whole schools of whom—are not noticed at all. Sidney's epoch-marking little treatise is dismissed in four unmeaning lines as "an urbane and eloquent essay, which labours under but one disadvantage, namely, that when it was composed in 1581 there was scarcely any poesy in England to be defended. This was posthumously printed in 1595." Ben Jonson's not less remarkable *Discoveries* are not even mentioned. How writers like Bacon, Hooker, Hobbes, Locke, and Berkeley fare we have not space to illustrate. Mr. Gosse, indeed, judging by his excursions into the realms of theology and philosophy, has certainly been wise to assign more space to *The Flower and the Leaf* than is assigned to Hobbes, Barrow, Butler, and Paley put together. We have by no means exhausted the list of blunders and absurdities to be found in this book; but we have, we fear, exhausted the patience of our readers, and we must bring our examination of it to a close.

The melancholy thing about all this is the perfect impunity with which such works as these can be given to the public. We have not the smallest doubt that this book has been extolled to the skies in reviews which have not detected a single error in it, and which have accepted its generalizations and its criticisms with unquestioning credulity; and we have as little doubt that those scholars who have dis-

cerned its defects and absurdities have chosen, from motives possibly of kindness, possibly of prudence, and possibly in mere contempt, to maintain silence about them. Had it appeared twenty years ago, it would instantly have been exposed and exploded, indeed no writer would have dared to insult serious readers by such a publication. What every reader has a right to demand from those who take upon themselves to instruct him are sincerity, industry, and competence; and what no critic has a right to condone is ostentatious indifference on the part of an author to the responsibilities incurred by him in undertaking to teach the public.

The sooner Mr. Gosse, and writers like Mr. Gosse, come to understand that, however ingeniously expressed, reckless generalizations, random assertions and the specious semblance of knowledge, erudition, and authority may pass current for a time, but are certain at last to be detected and exposed, the better for themselves and the better for their readers. If, too, they wish justice to be done to the accomplishments which they really possess, they will do well to remember what is implied in the proverb *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, and what the Germans mean by VERMESSENHEIT.

LOG-ROLLING AND EDUCATION

WE see no objection to Mutual Admiration Societies; they are institutions which afford much pleasure, and can, as a rule, do little harm. If vanity be a foible, it is a foible well worth cherishing, and will be treated tenderly even by a philosopher. For, of all the illusions which give a zest to life, the illusions created by this flattering passion are the most delightful and inspiring. They are so easily evoked; they respond with such impartial obsequiousness to the call of the humblest magician. He has but to speak the word—and they are made; to command—and they are created. A becomes what B and C pronounce him to be, and what A and C have done for B, that will B and A do in turn for C. It is a delicious occupation, no doubt, a feast for each, in which no crude surfeit reigns, where, in Bacon's phrase, satisfaction and appetite are perpetually interchangeable; it is like the herbage in the Paradise of the Spanish poet, "quanto mas se

goza mas renace,"—the more we enjoy it the more it grows. It is an old game—"Vetus fabula per novos histriones":—

"'Twas, 'Sir, your law,' and 'Sir, your eloquence,'
'Yours Cowper's manner and yours Talbot's sense';
Thus we dispose of all poetic merit:
Yours Milton's genius and mine Homer's spirit.
Walk with respect behind, while we at ease
Weave laurel crowns and take what name we please.
'My dear Tibullus!' if that will not do,
Let me be Horace, and be Ovid you."

And there is this advantage. If a sufficient number of magicians can, or will, combine, these illusions may not only serve each magician for life, but become, for a time, simply indistinguishable from realities. Now, as we said before, we see no great harm in this. It is, to say the least, a very amiable and brotherly employment; and were it quite disinterested and honest, it would be closely allied with that virtue which St. Paul exalts above all virtues. But everything has or ought to have its limits. When Boswell attempted to defend certain Methodists who had been expelled from the University of Oxford, Johnson retorted that the University was perfectly right—"They were examined, and found to be mighty ignorant fellows." "But," said Boswell, "was it not hard to expel them? for I am told they were good beings." "I believe," replied the sage, "that they might be good

beings, but they were not fit to be in the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field, but we turn her out of a garden."

To our certain knowledge many of those who owe their reputation to the art to which we are referring are good beings, and we have little doubt that most of those who are least scrupulous in practising it are good beings also. Indeed it may be conceded at once that there is always a strong presumption that members of Mutual Admiration Societies belong to this class. On the reciprocity of essentially Christian virtues their very existence depends. Whatever may be thought of their heads, their hearts are pretty sure to be in the right place. They may, it is true, act more in the spirit of the precept that we should do unto others as we would they should do unto us than in that of the precept which pronounces that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This, however, is a trifle —one of those distinctions without differences which are so common in Christian ethics. But for ourselves we must, as we have said before, discriminate. To the cow in the field we have no objection; it is of the cow in the garden that we complain.

To drop metaphor: there are certain spheres of literary activity in which the circulation of mutual puffery by this clique or by that clique

can do comparatively little harm to any one or to anything. There are some subjects on which every reader is not only perfectly competent to form his own judgment, but is pretty certain to do so. He may amuse himself by seeing what the critics have to say, and he may be induced by them in the first instance to turn to the book which is in question, but he is practically unaffected by any opinions unless they happen to coincide with his own. Such is the case with books of travel, with novels, and, as a rule, with poetry. Here the arts of the log-roller are as harmless as the frolics of whales with tubs. No one takes what he sees seriously except those who are engaged in the pastime. If Mr. A cannot give the general public what it appreciates, nothing that Mr. B can say will cajole that public into believing that it has what it has not. Mr. C and Mr. D may vociferate, till they are hoarse, that "Mr. E is the subtlest and most discriminating critic that the English-speaking world has ever known"; but if Mr. E's eulogies of Mr. C's verses and of Mr. D's novels are not corroborated by the general reader's independent judgment, the fame of Messrs. C and D will not extend beyond their clique. If in poetry or prose fiction trash succeeds, as it undoubtedly does, it succeeds not because of the skill with which it has been puffed, though this may be a factor in its success, but because it hits the popu-

lar taste. The public is seldom deceived except when it wishes to be deceived. Log-rolling has much to answer for: it loads our bookstalls with nonsense and rubbish, it impedes the production of sound literature, it degrades the standard of taste, it degrades the standard of aim and attainment, and indirectly it is in every way mischievous to literature. But we very much question whether in the case of publications which appeal directly to general readers, and are within the scope of their judgments, the fortune of a book is in any way affected by the arts of the log-roller. Amusement mingled with impatience is probably the prevailing sentiment when Mr. C and Mr. D are loud in each other's praises. We remember the amœbæan strains of Hayley and Miss Seward in Porson's epigram :—

Miss Seward: Tuneful poet, Britain's glory;
Mr. Hayley, that is you.
Mr. Hayley: Ma'am, you carry all before you;
Trust me, Lichfield Swan, you do.

Miss Seward: Ode, didactic, epic, sonnet;
Mr. Hayley, you're divine.
Mr. Hayley: Ma'am, I'll take my oath upon it,
You yourself are all the nine.

Or, in a less good-natured mood, we may perhaps recall with a certain satisfaction Pope's cruel but pathetic picture of the minor log-rollers of his day :—

> Next plunged a feeble but a desperate pack,
> With each a sickly brother at his back.
> Sons of a day! just buoyant on the flood,
> Then numbered with the puppies in the mud.

But there are certain subjects and certain spheres in which the arts of the log-roller, if equally contemptible, are not quite so harmless.

During the last fifteen years the Press has been teeming with books designed to circulate among readers who are seriously interested in *belles lettres* and criticism. Some of them have appeared as volumes in a series, some as independent monographs and manuals, and some in the humbler forms of editorial introductions and notes. Among them may be found works of really distinguished scholars, and works in every way worthy of such scholars; and it is no doubt works like these which have given credit and authority generally to publications of this kind. The popularity of these productions has been extraordinary, and their manufacture has become one of the most lucrative of hackney employments. Nor is this all. Their professed purpose is the dissemination of serious instruction, is to become text-books in literary history and in literary criticism; and, as text-books on those subjects, they have made their way, or are making their way, not merely into our public libraries, but also into the libraries of nearly

every educational institute in England. Indeed it would not be too much to say that if, among general readers, about eighty in every hundred derive almost all they know about English literature, both historically and critically, from these volumes, in our schools and colleges, the average number of those whose studies are and ought to be independent of them is yearly diminishing. It is of these text-books and of the responsibilities incurred by those who produce and circulate them that we wish to speak.

We have already commented on the distinction which must be drawn between what is best and what is inferior in the publications to which we have been referring; and, in truth, the difference is one not of degree but in kind. As our desire is, in Swift's phrase, to lash the vice but spare the name, we shall not specify the works which we have selected as typical of log-rolling in relation to education. Till we saw them we had no conception of the lengths to which this sort of thing has run. Ostensibly the works before us are critical and biographical monographs designed to become text-books for students of English literature; they may be more correctly described as complete epitomes of the art of puffery. The writers begin by assuming that the objects of their ludicrous adulation—who are, like themselves, contribu-

tors of the average order to current periodicals, and the authors of monographs similar to their own—are by general consent critics of classical authority. The most deferential references are made to them in almost every page. Now it is "Goethe and Mr. So-and-so have observed," or "Coleridge has remarked, but Mr. So-and-so is inclined to think," etc. Sometimes it assumes the form of a sort of awful reverence, as "Mr. So-and-so is a little uncertain, but surely he more than hints," or "Mr. So-and-so, as we all know, was once of opinion, though he has recently found reason to alter," etc. We saw not long ago in the notes to a certain edition of a classical author: "Socrates and Mr. X—— *of Trinity* have observed," etc. Occasionally this homage expresses itself—and this is more serious—in the form of long extracts from Mr. So-and-so's writings. Nothing is more common in works like these than to find critics and writers of classical authority either completely ignored, or, if cited at all, cited only in the connection which we have indicated. That the gentlemen who are the subjects of this grotesque flattery either have paid or will pay their friends in kind may, of course, be taken for granted. Thus one factitious reputation builds up another, and one bad book ushers in twenty which are worse.

Macaulay has an amusing passage in which he

has collected the names of those who, according to Horace Walpole, were "the first writers" in England in 1753. It might have been expected that Hume, Fielding, Dr. Johnson, Richardson, Smollett, Collins, and Gray would at least have had a place among them. Not at all. They were Lord Bath, Mr. W. Whithed, Sir Charles Williams, Mr. Soame Jenyngs, Mr. Cambridge, and Mr. Coventry; in other words, a clique of politicians and men of fashion of the very titles of whose writings even a reader tolerably well read in the literature of those times might excusably be ignorant. We are not exaggerating when we say that this system of strenuous and well-directed mutual puffery is, in our own time, leading to similarly perverted conceptions about the relative position of those who owe their celebrity to these ignoble arts and those on whose fame Time's test has set its seal, not merely on the part of the general public, but on the part of those who are responsible for the books introduced into schools and educational institutes. We will give an illustration.

At a meeting held not long ago, for the purpose of prescribing books for a Reading Society, the choice lay between some of Johnson's Lives, Select Essays by Sainte Beuve, and Select Essays by Matthew Arnold on the one hand, and on the other certain books typical of the literature of which we have been speaking.

The debate which ensued was very amusing. A member of the committee, a gentleman of conservative temper, strongly urged the claims of Johnson, Sainte Beuve, and Arnold, on the ground that it was the duty of the Society to encourage the study of what was excellent and of classical quality, especially in criticism; that it was not merely the information contained in a book which had to be considered, but the style, the tone, the touch; that the monographs proposed as an alternative could scarcely be regarded as of the first order, either in expression or in matter, for he had observed, though he had only glanced at them, several solecisms in grammar and several inaccuracies of statement; and he concluded by adding that other writings of these particular authors with which he happened to be more familiar had not prejudiced him in their favour. Upon that, another member of the council, who had been busily conning the Press notices inserted in the monographs in question, pleaded their claim to preference. "Dr. Johnson," he remarked, "was no doubt a great man in his day, but his day had long been over; no one read him now. Sainte Beuve and Matthew Arnold might be classical and all that, but they were not up to date." He could not talk as an expert on literary matters, and therefore he would not contradict what the former speaker had said,

"but there could be no doubt that Messrs. So-and-so," the authors of the monographs in question, "were very big men—bigger men, I should think (glancing at the Press notices in his hand), than Sainte Beuve and Matthew Arnold. At any rate, everybody has heard of them; and," he continued, "listen to this." He then proceeded to read out some of the notices, adding that it was difficult, if he might say so without offence, to reconcile what his friend, the preceding speaker, had said with what was said in these notices. He was a little staggered—for, though a simple, he was a shrewd man—when the very remarkable similarity between Mr. A's eulogies of Mr. B and Mr. B's eulogies of Mr. A was pointed out to him, and when, in reference to anonymous testimony, he was reminded that one voice may have many echoes. It was generally felt, more especially as Mr. A or Mr. B had, we believe, more than one acquaintance among the committee, that the debate was taking rather an embarrassing turn. The question was then put to the vote, and the monographs were carried by a majority of three to one.

What occurred at this meeting is occurring every day, variously modified, wherever the choice of books is in question, whether in public libraries or in educational institutions. A literature, the sole credentials of which are derived

from those who produce and circulate it, is gradually superseding that of our classics. We seem in truth to be losing all sense of the essential distinction between the writings of the average man of letters and those of the masters.

OUR LITERARY GUIDES

III. BOOKS WORTH READING [1]

WERE it not for its melancholy significance, this would be one of the most amusing books which it has ever been our fortune to meet with. Of Mr. Frank W. Raffety we have not the honour to know anything, except what we have gathered from this little volume and from its title-page. But he must be a singularly interesting gentleman. His enthusiasm for books, his portentous ignorance of them; his strenuous desire to improve the popular taste by pleading for the best, his instinctive tendency to make in all cases for the worst; his sublime intolerance of everything in literature which falls short of excellence, his more than sublime indifference to the commonest rules of grammar and syntax in expressing that intolerance; the *naïveté*, the frankness, the recklessness with which he displays his incompetence for the task which he has undertaken—in these qualifications

[1] *Books Worth Reading.* A Plea for the Best and an Essay towards Selection, with Short Introductions. By Frank W. Raffety, London.

and accomplishments Mr. Raffety is not perhaps alone, but he has certainly no superior.

Mr. Raffety aspires to guide his readers through the chief literatures of the world. Now the task of a reviewer, who has a conscience, is not always a cheerful one, and we confess that, when we had generally surveyed Mr. Raffety's work, we resolved to amuse ourselves by trying to discover of which of the literatures, to which Mr. Raffety constitutes himself a guide, Mr. Raffety is probably most ignorant. It is a nice point. Let our readers judge. We will begin with Mr. Raffety and the Classics. Of Theognis, the most voluminous of the Greek Gnomic poets, it is said that "only a few sentences"—Mr. Raffety is presumably under the impression that Theognis wrote in prose—"quoted in the works of Plato and others survive." "The Greek Anthology," we are astounded to learn, "is by Lord Neaves" and "is one of the best volumes in the A.C.E.R. series." What Mr. Raffety no doubt means is, that Lord Neaves is the author of a monograph on the Greek anthology, as he certainly was. With regard to Herodotus, Mr. Raffety has evidently got some information not generally accessible. His *History*, we are told, "is a great prose epic. . . . The second book is of the most interest. In other works are the histories of Crœsus, Cyrus," etc. It would be interesting to know what other works besides his *History*

Herodotus has left. Of the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus Mr. Raffety gives the following interesting account. It contains, he says, "the story of Prometheus and his defiance of Jupiter, who condemned him to be bound to a rock, where he died rather than yield." We exhort Mr. Raffety, before his work passes into a second edition, to consult his Classical Dictionary.

Of the translations recommended by Mr. Raffety we should very much like to get a sight of the translation of Pindar by Calverley, of the joint translation of the same classic by Messrs. E. Myers and A. Lang, and of the joint translation of Thucydides "by Jowett and Rev. H. Dale, 2 vols." Of Herodotus, of Æschylus, of Sophocles, of Pindar, of Polybius, of Demosthenes, what are, by general consent, esteemed the best translations are not so much as mentioned. Latin literature fares even worse in the hands of our guide. Mr. Raffety appears to know no more about Catullus than that he was a writer of epigrams. Such trifles as the *Attis*, the *Peleus and Thetis*, the Julia and Manlius marriage song, the *Coma Berenices*, the love lyrics and threnodies he does not condescend to notice. In "guiding" his readers to translations of Lucretius and Juvenal, Munro's version of the first in prose and Gifford's version of the second in verse—which Conington pronounced to be the best version of any Roman classic in our language—are not so much as

referred to. Nor, again, in the case of Plautus and Terence, are the excellent versions of Thornton and Coleman noticed. Tacitus, who is oddly described as "the foremost man of the day," an estimate which might have pleased but which would certainly have surprised him, chronicled, we are told, "the foundation of the Christian religion." Mr. Raffety's assurance on this point will probably disappoint inquisitive readers. Equally surprising are the portions of the work dealing with the modern literatures. In the course of these we learn that "the *Nibelungen Lied* is the oldest drama in Europe"; that the *Areopagitica* and the *Defence of the People of England* are Milton's best prose writings—Mr. Raffety apparently not being aware that the second work is in Latin, and that if he means the first *Defence*, it is anything but one of the best of Milton's writings. We are also informed that Dryden was most valuable as a translator from the Greek and Latin; Dryden's versions from the Greek begin and end with paraphrases of four Idylls of Theocritus, the first book of the *Iliad* and the parting of Hector and Andromache from the sixth, and are notoriously the very worst things he ever did.

Sometimes Mr. Raffety fairly takes our breath away, as when he informs us that Gray's tomb can be seen in the little churchyard of Stoke Pogis "with the *Elegy* written upon it." Can Mr.

Raffety be acquainted with the length of the *Elegy* and with the proportions of a tombstone? Chaucer, we are informed, wrote some poems in Italian. We should very much like to see them, and so probably would Professor Skeat, for they appear to have escaped the notice of all Chaucer's editors. Swift's *Tale of a Tub* was written, we are told, "against the teaching of Hobbes!"

It is indeed impossible to open this book anywhere without alighting on some most discreditable blunder or absurdity. Thus we are informed that Macaulay's essay on Burleigh treats of the time of James I.—Burleigh, as we need hardly say, dying nearly five years before James came to the throne, and Macaulay's essay having no reference at all to James I.'s time. "There is," says Mr. Raffety, "no more stirring lyric than *The Cotter's Saturday Night*," a remark which shows that Mr. Raffety does not know what a lyric poem is. But to look for blunders in Mr. Raffety's pages would be to look for leaves in a summer forest. His critical remarks and biographical notes are truly delightful. We wish we had space to quote some of them. Of their general quality the following profound remark is a fair specimen :—"Dante requires study, and an endeavour after appreciation." Mr. Raffety is always anxious to conduct his readers by short cuts and to save them trouble. Macaulay's *Essays*, for example, should be read before his

History; "they will be more easily tackled," he says, "than the *History* in the first instance." But on the subject of Gibbon Mr. Raffety is adamant, being fully of the late Professor Freeman's opinion—"Whatever else is read, Gibbon must be read." How Gibbon is to be read, or why Gibbon is to be read, or in what edition he should be read, Mr. Raffety does not explain.

Now, what possible end can be served by books like these, except to misguide and misinform? Here is a writer, who certainly leaves us with the impression that he cannot read the Greek and Latin classics in the original, setting up as a director of classical study, and pronouncing *ex cathedrâ* on the merits of translations of these classics. His knowledge of the modern literature is, as is abundantly manifest, though we have neither space nor patience to illustrate, equally insufficient and unsubstantial, and yet he undertakes to initiate and guide the inexperienced in these studies. This book is presented to the public in a most attractive form, being excellently printed on excellent paper, and will naturally be taken seriously by those to whom it appeals. It is for this reason that we also have felt it our duty to take it seriously. And, as we believe that every bad book stands in the way of a good one, we can promise Mr. Raffety, and writers like Mr. Raffety, that we shall continue to take them seriously.

THE NEW CRITICISM[1]

NEARLY two thousand years ago Horace observed that, though every calling presupposed some qualification in those who followed it, and a man who knew nothing of marine affairs would not undertake to manage a ship, or a man who knew nothing of drugs to compound prescriptions, yet everybody fancied himself competent to commence poet. Qualified or unqualified, at it we all go, he complains, and scribble verses. But times have changed, and those who in Horace's day were the pests of poetry, with which they could amuse themselves without mischief, have now become the pests of another kind of literature in which their diversions are not quite so harmless. Where the poetaster once stood the criticaster now stands. The transformation of the one pest into the other, where they do not, as they often do, become both, is easily accounted for, and as Dr. Johnson has so excellently explained it, we

[1] *Retrospective Reviews.* A Literary Log. By Richard Le Gallienne. 2 vols.

cannot do better than transcribe his words. "Criticism," says the Doctor, "is a study by which men grow important and formidable at a very small expense. The power of invention has been conferred by nature upon few, and the labour of learning those sciences which may by mere labour be attained is too great to be willingly endured; but every man can exert such judgment as he has upon the works of others, and he whom nature has made weak and idleness keeps ignorant may yet support his vanity by the name of critic." But criticasters and their patrons have improved on this—for "he whom nature has made weak and idleness keeps ignorant" may, in our time, not merely support his vanity, but support himself.

Till we inspected the volumes before us, we had really no conception of the pass to which things have now come in so-called criticism. The writer sits in judgment on most of the authors who have, during recent years, been before the public. He passes sentence not merely on current novelists, poets, and essayists, but on some of our classics, and on books like the late Mr. Pater's *Lectures on Plato and Platonism* and Dr. Wharton's edition of *Sappho*. To any acquaintance with the principles of criticism, to any conception of criticism in relation to principles, to any learning, to any scholarship, to any knowledge of the history of literature and of the masterpieces of literature,

either in our own language or in other languages, he has not the smallest pretension. Nor does he allow this to be gathered simply from the work itself, where it is, needless to say, abundantly apparent, but with a *naïveté* and impudence which are at once ludicrous and exasperating he glories in his ignorance. Literature and its interpretation are to him what the Bible and its interpretation were to the ranting sectaries of Dryden's satire. In its explanation knowledge and learning were folly, nothing was needed but "grace."

> "No measure ta'en from knowledge, all from grace,
> Study and pains were now no more their care,
> Texts were explained by fasting and by prayer."

So to our critic knowledge and learning are of equal unimportance—nay, equally contemptible—and all that is needed to take the measure of Plato and Wordsworth is, in his own words, "the capacity for appreciation." With this very slender outfit he sits down to the work of criticism, to enlighten the world *de omni scibili* in literature, from the lyrics of *Sappho*, "the singer, a single petal of whose rose is more than the whole rose-garden of later women singers," to "the statesmanlike reach and grasp" of Mr. E. Gosse's essays.

To discuss seriously the opinions or impressions of a writer of this kind would be as absurd as to attempt to fight gnats with a sword, and

we shall merely content ourselves with transcribing, without comment, a few of the aphorisms with which these volumes are studded. "Criticism is the art of praise." "Shakespeare is the greatest English poet, not because he created Hamlet and Lear, but because he could write that speech about Perdita's flowers and Claudio's speech on death in *Measure for Measure*." "The perfection of prose is the essay, of poetry the lyric, and the most beautiful book is that which contains the most beautiful words." These specimens will probably suffice. Mr. Le Gallienne is also of opinion that "culture is mainly a matter of temperament"—that "a man is born cultured," that mere education and study are to such a one not simply superfluities, but impertinences. "What matters it," he eloquently asks, "that one does not remember or even has never read great writers? Our one concern is to possess an organization open to great and refined impressions." A paltry scholar, for example, may be able to construe Sappho, but it is only "an organization open to great and refined impressions" which can discern (in a crib) "the pathos of eternity in some twenty words" of "this passionate singer of Lesbos." Plato may be studied by poor pedants, but to an organization of this kind the binding of a volume is sufficient enlightenment; "to merely hold in the hand and turn over its pages is a counsel in style," for do not "the temperate beauty, the

dry beauty beloved of Plato, find expression in the sweet and stately volume itself" [he is "reviewing" the late Mr. Pater's lectures on Plato], "with its smooth night-blue binding, its rose-leaf yellow pages, its soft and yet grave type"? The value of Mr. Le Gallienne's judgments, of his praise, and of his censure, which, ludicrous to relate, are quoted by some publishers as recommendations, or "opinions of the press," may be estimated by these dicta, and by this theory of a critical education.

Macaulay somewhere speaks of a certain nondescript broth which, in some Continental inns, was kept constantly boiling, and copiously poured, without distinction, on every dish as it came up to table. The writer of these essays appears, metaphorically speaking, to be provided with a similar abomination. Whatever be his theme, poem, essay, novel, picture, he contrives to serve it up with the same condiment, a sickly and nauseous compound of preciosity and sentimentalism.

The melancholy thing about all this is the profound unconsciousness on the part of the author of these volumes that he is exciting ridicule; that he is, in Shakespeare's phrase, making himself a motley to the view. But there are considerations more melancholy still. We should not have noticed these volumes had they not been representative and typical of a school of so-called critics which is becoming

more and more prominent. Incredible as it may seem, there are certain sections of literary society and of the general public which take Mr. Le Gallienne and his dicta quite seriously, and to which the prodigious nonsense in these volumes does not present itself as absurdity, but as the articles of a creed. These essays have, moreover, appeared in publications the names of some of which carry authority. It is, therefore, high time that some stand should be made, some protest entered against writings which cannot fail to corrupt popular taste and to degrade the standard of popular literature. Of one thing we are very certain, that no self-respecting literary journal which undertook to review these volumes could allow them to pass without denunciation.

Of Mr. Le Gallienne we know nothing personally. He is, if we are rightly informed, still a young man, and we would in all kindness exhort him to turn the abilities which he undoubtedly possesses to better account. There is much in these essays which shows that he was intended for something better than to further the decadence. If, instead of sneering at scholars, affecting to despise learning and study, indulging in silly paradoxes, tinsel epigrams, and absurd generalisations, he would read and think, and endeavour to do justice to himself and to his opportunities, he might, we make no doubt, obtain an honourable reputation. There is much

which is attractive in his work, and in the personality reflected in it. He is not a charlatan, for though he is ignorant, he is honest. Genial and sympathetic, he has much real critical insight, and, in going through his volumes, we have noted many remarks which were both sound and fine. At its best his style is excellent,—clear, lively, and engaging. Let him cease to play the buffoon, which can only end in his gaining the applause of mere fools and the contempt of every one else.

THE GENTLE ART OF SELF-ADVERTISEMENT

THE illustrious Barnum once observed that, if a man's capital consisted of a shilling, one penny of that shilling should be spent in purchasing something, and the remaining eleven-pence should be invested in advertising what was purchased. There was, perhaps, a touch of exaggeration in that great man's remark, but it was founded on a profound knowledge both of human nature and of the world. Intrinsically nothing is valuable; things are what we make or imagine them. Even the diamond, as a costly commodity, exists on suffrage. If a man cannot persuade his fellow-creatures that he has genius, talent, learning, "'twere all alike as if he had them not." What Persius asks with a sneer, "Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter?"—is your knowledge nothing, unless some one else know that you are knowing?—a wiser man would ask in all seriousness. Shakespeare was never nearer the truth than when he wrote—

> "No man is the lord of anything,
> Though in and of him there be much consisting,
> Till he communicates his parts to others;
> Nor doth he of himself know them for aught,
> Till he behold them formed in the applause
> Where they are extended."

And never was a man more mistaken than the old preacher who said to his congregation, "If you have a talent in your napkin, you should take care not to hide it; but if you have no talent, but only a napkin, you should not so flourish your napkin as to create the impression that it is full of talents." Why, this is just what nine men in ten who court fame have to do. Nature is kind, but seldom profuse. If she really endows a man with what, if trumpeted, would make him famous, the odds are she couples with her gifts pride, modesty, or self-respect, which, to say the least, heavily handicap him in the race for reputation. When she does not endow with the reality, she compensates by bestowing the power of acquiring the credit for it. She is, as a rule, much too thrifty to heap on the same man the keen pleasures of genuine enthusiasm and the sweets of popular applause. An impartial mother, she loves all her children, and divides her favours equally between shams and true men. This Churchill marks in his brutal way; speaking of a certain contemporary, he describes him as endowed with

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of men, so, as we all know, there is a moment at the demise of literary men when the voracity of public curiosity knows neither distinction nor satiety. This is the moment for the self-advertiser to nick; this is the time for him to float, with his defunct friend, on the lips of men. He will find readers for anything he may choose to print—that letter with its exquisite compliments, that conversation in which his poor attainments were so generously over-estimated, or the importance of his slight literary services so much exaggerated. Of course, the value of such advertisements will be in proportion to the eminence of the subject of the reminiscences—and happy, thrice happy, those who were able to turn men like Darwin, Tennyson, and Browning to this account; their reputation may be regarded as made. But it is not always necessary to wait till great men die, though it is an experiment too bold and perilous for most aspirants to make this sort of capital out of them while they are still alive. Still *audentes fortuna juvat*, and it has been done. A certain minor poet published in an American magazine, not many years ago, an article entitled "A Day with Lord Tennyson," in which he represented the Laureate as turning the conversation on his (the minor bard's) poetry. We are told how the great man, after fervently reiterating a stanza of that minor bard which pleased him, requested his son to take it down in writing; how that son,

though the day was cold and blowy, took it down; how Tennyson grasped, at parting, his brother poet's hand, and begged in transport that he would "come again and come often." He came, we believe, no more. But what of that? He had accomplished a feat so simple and yet so original that it may fairly be questioned whether what Mr. Burnum used to call his masterpiece was in any way comparable to it. To interview a great man, even on an assumption of equality, is, as we all know, a comparatively easy matter, but to turn the conversation of the great man into a seasonable puff of yourself requires a combination of qualities not often united in a single person. The worst of feats like these is that they must have a tendency to make great men a little shy of encouraging the acquaintance of those to whom they can be so useful. But simplicity, as Thucydides remarks, is one of the chief ingredients of greatness, and it is a quality very difficult to wear out.

If Tennyson's interviewer has ever had a rival in the important art which has been discussed —for the benefit of youthful ambition—in this article, we are inclined to think that that rival was the Rev. Aris Willmott. This now almost forgotten writer was a very voluminous author both in verse and prose; but his merits were not appreciated by an ungrateful public so much as they ought to have been. He resorted, there-

fore, to the following exquisitely ingenious device. He published a handsome volume, which is now before us, entitled *Gems from English Literature*, thus arranged: Bacon, Rev. Aris Willmott, Jeremy Taylor, Rev. Aris Willmott, Barrow, Rev. Aris Willmott, sandwiching himself regularly through the prose classics, and in the same way through the poets—Shakespeare, Rev. Aris Willmott, Milton, Rev. Aris, etc. As birthday books, press notices, interviews at home, portraits of distinguished authors in their studies, and the like are getting a little stale, we cordially recommend this rev. gentleman's expedient—it may be judiciously modified—to the notice of all who are unable to distinguish fame from notoriety.

R. L. STEVENSON'S LETTERS[1]

THE late Robert Louis Stevenson is a writer who has every title to commiseration, and the appearance of the volumes before us may be said to mark the climax of his misfortunes. Diseased and sickly from his birth, with his life frequently hanging on a thread, he probably never knew the sensation of perfect health. During the impressionable years of early youth his surroundings appear to have been most uncongenial; he was forced into a profession for which he had no taste and no aptitude. In constant straits for money, at times he was miserably poor; his apprenticeship to letters was long and arduous, for he was not one of Nature's favourites, and attained what he did attain by unsparing and severe labour. His wandering and restless life, bringing him as it did into contact with all phases of humanity and with all parts of the world, was of course in

[1] *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson to his Family and Friends.* Selected and Edited with Notes and Introduction by Sidney Colvin. 2 vols.

many respects favourable to his work, but it had at the same time serious disadvantages. It gave him little time for reflection; it imported a certain feverishness into his energy, and rendered that concentration and steadiness, without which no really great work can be accomplished, impossible. That in these circumstances Stevenson should have produced so much, and so much which is of a high order of merit, is most creditable to him, and not a little surprising. "He stands," says his friend Professor Colvin, "as the writer who in the last quarter of the nineteenth century has handled with the most of freshness and inspiriting power the widest range of established literary forms—the moral, critical and personal essay, travels sentimental and other, parables and tales of mystery, boys' stories of adventure, memoirs; nor let lyrical and meditative verse both English and Scottish, and especially nursery verse, a new vein for genius to work in, be forgotten." With some reservation this may be conceded, and this is as far as eulogy can legitimately be stretched.

But, unhappily, some of Stevenson's admirers have made themselves and their idol ridiculous, by raising him to a position his claims to which are preposterous. If he be measured with his contemporaries the comparison will generally be in his favour—he certainly did best what hundreds can do well. His essays have distinc-

tion and excellence; his novels, travels, and short tales, though scarcely entitled to the praise of originality, as they strike no new notes and are mere variants of the work of Scott, Kingston, Ballantyne, De Quincey and Poe, bear the impress of genius as distinguished from mere talent, and reflect a very charming personality; his verse, too, is pleasing and skilful. But when we are told that he will stand the third in a trio with Burns and Scott, and when we have to listen to serious appeals to Edinburgh to raise a statue to him beside the author of *Marmion* and the Waverley Novels, all who truly appreciate his work may well tremble for the reaction which is certain to succeed such extravagant overestimation. The truth is that poor Stevenson, himself one of the simplest, sincerest and most modest of men, got involved with a clique who may be described as manufacturers of factitious reputations,—the circulators of a false currency in criticism. In these days of appeals to the masses it is as easy to write up the sort of works which are addressed to them—popular essays, tales and novels—as it is to write up the commodities of quack doctors and the shares of bogus companies. The production of popular literature is now a trade, and in some cases this kind of puffery is the work of deliberate fraud, originating from various motives. In many cases it simply springs from ignorance and critical incompetence, current criticism being, to a con-

siderable extent, in the hands of very young men who, having neither the requisite knowledge nor the proper training, are unable to judge a writer comparatively. In other cases it is to be attributed to good nature and the tendency in the genial appreciation of real merit to indulge in extravagant expression. But the result is the same. A reputation, so grotesquely out of proportion to what is really merited that sober people are inclined to suspect that all is imposture, is gradually inflated. Eulogy kindles eulogy; hyperbole is heaped on hyperbole; a ludicrous importance is attached to every trifle which falls, or which ever has fallen, from this Press-created Fetish. While he is alive he is encouraged, or rather importuned, to force his power of production to keep pace with the demand for everything bearing his signature; when he is dead the very refuse of his study finds eager publishers.

This kind of thing has obviously many advantages, which are by no means confined to the object of the idolatry itself. In the first place it means business; it is the creation of a goose which can lay golden eggs, and it is, in the second place, a creation which reflects no little glory on the creators. Is it nothing to be the satellites of so radiant a luminary? When the familiar correspondence of the great man is printed, will not what he was pleased

to say, with all the friendly license of private intercourse, in the way of compliment and eulogy, be proclaimed from the house-tops?

All this is exactly what has happened in the case of poor Stevenson. No man ever took more justly his own measure, or would have been more annoyed at the preposterous eulogies of which he has been made the subject, on the part of interested or ill-judging friends. We wonder what he would himself have said, could he have seen the letters before us described, as they were described in one of the current Reviews, as "the most exhaustive and distinguished literary correspondence which England has ever seen." We entirely absolve Professor Colvin from any suspicion of being actuated by unworthy motives in publishing them. It is abundantly clear that he has not published them to puff himself, that his labour has been a labour of love, and that he believed himself to be piously fulfilling a duty to his friend. But they ought never to have been given to the world. More than two-thirds have nothing whatever to justify their appearance in print, and merely show, what will surprise those who knew Stevenson by his literary writings, how vapid, vulgar and commonplace he could be. In their slangy familiarity and careless spontaneity they remind us of Byron's, but what a contrast do these trivial

and too often insipid tattlings present to Byron's brilliance and point, his wit, his piquancy, his insight into life and men! Only here and there, in a touch of description, or in a casual reflection, do we find anything to distinguish them from the myriads of letters which are interchanged between young men every day in the year. Their one attraction lies in the glimpses they reveal of Stevenson's own charming personality, his kindliness, his sympathy, his great modesty, his manliness, his transparent truthfulness and honesty. It is amusing to watch him with one of his correspondents who was evidently endeavouring to establish a mutual exchange of flattery. The urbane skill with which this gentleman's persistently fulsome compliments are either fenced or waived aside, the ironical delicacy with which, when a return is extorted, they are repaid, in a measure strictly adjusted to desert and yet certain not to disappoint expectant vanity, are quite exquisite. "The suns go swiftly out," he writes to him, referring to the death of Tennyson and Browning and others, "and I see no suns to follow, nothing but a universal twilight of the demi-divinities, with parties like you and me beating on toy drums, and playing on penny whistles about glow-worms." The indignant letter to the *New York Tribune*, in defence of James Payn, who had been accused of plagiarising from one of Stevenson's fictions, well deserves placing on

permanent record, as an illustration of his chivalrous loyalty to his friends.

We are sorry, we repeat, that these letters have been given to the world. So far as Stevenson's reputation is concerned they can only detract from it. When they illustrate him on his best side they merely emphasise what his works illustrate so abundantly that further illustration is a mere work of supererogation. When they present him, as for the most part they do, in dishabille, they exhibit him very greatly to his disadvantage. If Professor Colvin had printed about one-third of them, and retained his excellent elucidatory introductions, which form practically a biography of Stevenson, he would have produced a work for which all admirers of that most pleasing writer would have thanked him. As it is, he has been guilty, in our opinion, of a grave error of judgment.

LITERARY ICONOCLASM[1]

AMONG the worthies of the fifteenth century there is no more interesting and picturesque figure than the Poet-King of Scotland, James I. Long before the poem on which his fame rests was given to the world, tradition had assigned him a high place among native makers, and his countrymen had been proud to add to the names of Dunbar and Douglas, of Henryson and Lyndsay, the name of the best of their kings. Great was their joy, therefore, when, in 1783, William Tytler gave public proof that the good King's title to the laurel was no mere title by courtesy, but that he had been the author of a poem which could fairly be regarded as one of the gems of Scottish literature. There cannot, in truth, be two opinions about the *Kingis Quair*. It is a poem of singular charm and beauty, and, though it is modelled closely on certain of Chaucer's minor poems, and is in other respects largely indebted to them, it is

[1] *The Authorship of the Kingis Quair.* A New Criticism by J. T. T. Brown.

no servile imitation; it bears the impress of original genius, not so much in details and incident as in tone, colour, and touch; it is a brilliant and most memorable achievement, and Rossetti hardly exaggerates when he describes it as

> "More sweet than ever a poet's heart
> Gave yet to the English tongue."

For more than a hundred years it has been the delight of all who care for the poetry of the past, and the story it tells, and tells so pathetically, is now among the "consecrated legends' which every one cherishes. "The best poet among kings, and the best king among poets," the name of the author of the *Kingis Quair* heads the list of royal authors. The stanza which he employed, though invented or adopted by Chaucer, takes its title from the King, and "the rime royal" will be in perpetual evidence of his services to poetry, as the University of St. Andrews will be of his services to learning and education. No generation has passed, from Sir Walter Scott to Mrs. Browning, and from Mrs. Browning to Gabriel Rossetti, which has not been lavish of honour and homage to him.

But, it seems, we have all been under a delusion. Our simple ancestors believed that James was the author of *Peebles to the Play* and *Christ's Kirk on the Green*; but *Peebles to the Play* and *Christ's Kirk on the Green* "are now"—Mr. J. T. T. Brown is speaking—

"relegated to the anonymous poetry of the sixteenth century, inexorably deposed by the internal evidence"; and Mr. Brown aspires to send the *Kingis Quair* the same way. His fell purpose is "to deprive James of his singing garment, and reduce him to the humbler rank of a King of Scots." There is something almost terrible in the exultation with which Mr. Brown assumes that—the King's claim to every other poem attributed to him having been completely demolished—it only remains to deprive him of the *Kingis Quair*, to make his poetical bankruptcy complete. And to the demolition of the King's claim to the "Quair" Mr. Brown ruthlessly proceeds. Now we have no intention of entering into the question of the authenticity of the minor poems to which Mr. Brown refers; but we shall certainly break a lance with this destructive critic in defence of James's claim to the *Kingis Quair*.

Mr. Brown contends, first, that there is no satisfactory external evidence in favour of the King's authorship of the poem; and, secondly, that the internal evidence is almost conclusive against him. What are the facts? In the Bodleian Library is a MS. the date of which is uncertain, but it cannot be assigned to an earlier period than 1488. This MS. contains certain poems of Chaucer, Hoccleve, Lydgate, and others, together with the *Kingis Quair*. Of the *Kingis Quair* it is, so far as is known, the only MS., and

to it alone we owe the preservation of the poem. Both title and colophon assign the work to James I., the words being: "Heireefter followis the quair Maid be King James of Scotland ye first, callit ye Kingis quair, and Maid quhen his Ma. wes in Ingland," the colophon running, "Explicit, &c., &c., quod Jacobus primus scotorum rex Illustrissimus." This is surely precise enough; but Mr. Brown insists that the statement carries very little weight, being no more than the *ipse dixit* of not merely an irresponsible, but of an unusually reckless copyist. The recklessness of this copyist Mr. Brown deduces from the fact that, of ten poems attributed to Chaucer in the same MS., five undoubtedly do not belong to him. On this we shall only remark that it would be interesting to know whether these poems have been attributed to Chaucer in other MSS. In any case, Mr. Brown must surely know that it is a very different thing for a copyist to miss-assign a few short poems and to make a statement so explicit as the statement here made with regard to the *Kingis Quair*. He must either have been guilty of deliberate fraud — and what right have we to assume this?—or he must have been misled, an hypothesis which is equally unwarrantable, unless it be adequately supported. And how does Mr. Brown proceed to support it? He contends that we have no satisfactory evidence from other sources that

James was the author of the poem. Walter Bower, the one contemporary historian, though he gives in his *Scotichronicon* an elaborate account of the King's accomplishments, is silent, Mr. Brown triumphantly observes, about his poetry. This may be conceded. But Weldon is equally silent about the poetry of James VI., and Buchanan about the poetry of Mary. And what says the next historian, John Major? "In the vernacular"—we give the passage in Mr. Brown's own version—"he was a most skilful composer. . . . He wrote a clever little book about the Queen before he took her to wife and while he was a prisoner," a plain reference to the *Kingis Quair*. Testimony to his poetical ability is also given by Hector Boyes in his *History of Scotland*, "In linguâ vernaculâ tam ornata faciebat carmina, ut poetam natum credidisses." So say John Bellenden, John Leslie, and George Buchanan. Of these witnesses Mr. Brown coolly observes that they carry little or no weight, because they only echo each other and Major. Major, Mr. Brown insists, is "the sole authority for the ascription to James of the vernacular poems." Certainly fame in the face of such critics as Mr. Brown is held on a very precarious tenure. Dunbar, in his *Lament of the Makaris*, enumerates, continues our critic, twenty-one Scottish poets, but passes James over in silence, therefore James's title to being a poet was unknown to him. Possibly; but

that Dunbar's list was not meant to be exhaustive is proved by the fact that he makes no mention of a poet, and of a considerable poet, who must have been well known to him, Thomas of Ercildoune. Nothing can be more misleading than deductions like these. Ovid has given us an elaborate catalogue of the poets of his time, but makes no mention of Manilius. Heywood and Taylor have given elaborate catalogues of the contemporary Elizabethan dramatists and make no mention of Cyril Tourneur. Addison has given us an account of the principal English poets, and makes no mention of Shakespeare. If Dante's and Chaucer's acquaintance with their distinguished brethren is to be estimated by those whom they noticed, it must have been far more limited than we know it, by other evidence, to have been. Lyndsay, again, is cited as testimony of ignorance of James's title to rank among poets; but in the list, in which he is silent about James, he is silent about poets so famous as Barbour, Blind Harry, Wyntown, Kennedy, and Douglas.

Mr. Brown next proceeds to the question of internal evidence. He cannot understand how it could come to pass, that a Scotchman, who left his native country when he was under twelve years of age, and who was educated by English tutors in England, should, after eighteen years of exile, employ "the Lowland Scottish dialect." This is surely not very difficult to explain.

Nothing so much endears his country to a man as exile, and nothing is more cherished by a patriot than his native language. Ten years' exile among the Getæ did not corrupt the Latinity of Ovid, and more than twenty years' exile did not impair the purity of Thucydides' Attic. The King may have had English tutors, but Wyntown distinctly tells us that he was allowed to retain, as his companions, four of his countrymen. When he served in France he had a Scottish bodyguard. The document in the King's own handwriting, printed by Chalmers, proves that in 1412 he was conversant with the Lowland dialect. In all probability, therefore, he carefully cherished his native language. The consensus of tradition places it beyond all doubt that he composed poetry in the vernacular, and as he wrote the *Kingis Quair* when he knew that he was about to return to Scotland as its king, it was surely the most natural thing in the world that he should compose a poem which told the story of himself and his young bride, whom he was introducing to his subjects as their queen, in the language of the country. But, says Mr. Brown, it is the Lowland dialect, with inflexions peculiar to Midland English, with many Chaucerian inflections engrafted on it. And what more natural? The Midland dialect was the dialect of his English teachers. The poems of Chaucer he probably had by heart.

Mr. Brown's object in all this is to relegate

the *Kingis Quair* to that group of poems which are represented by the *Romaunt of the Rose*, *The Court of Love*, and *Lancelot of the Lak*, which appeared late in the fifteenth century, and in which all these peculiarities are very pronounced. Into philological details we have not space to enter, but this we will say. We will admit that *ane* before a consonant, the past participle in *yt* or *it*, the pronouns *thaire* and *thame*, the plural form *quhilkis*, the employment of the verb *to do* in the emphatic conjugation and the like, are peculiarities which belong to a period not earlier than about 1440, and that all these peculiarities are to be found in the poem. But, we contend that these are just as likely to be due to the transcriber as they are to the author. Nothing was so common with copyists as to import into their texts the peculiarities of their own dialects, indeed it was habitual with them. Thus Hampole's *Pricke of Conscience* was greatly altered by southern scribes. Thus, in the Bannatyne MS., Chaucer's minor poems were similarly altered by northern scribes. It is, in truth, the very height of rashness to dispute the genuineness of an original, in consequence of the presence of peculiarities which might quite well have been imported into it by a copyist. The resemblances between this poem and the *Court of Love* are, we admit, not likely to have been mere coincidences, and we are quite ready to admit that the *Court of Love*

in the form in which we have it now, must be assigned to a much later date, more than a century later, than the date (1423) assigned to the *Kingis Quair*. But this is certain—that many, and very many, of the resemblances between the two poems are to be attributed to the fact that the writers were saturated with the influence of Chaucer, and delighted in imitating and recalling his poetry. If, again, it be assumed that one poem was the exemplar of the other, this is indisputable, that the *Court of Love* was modelled on the *Kingis Quair*, and not the *Kingis Quair* on the *Court of Love*. For, setting aside peculiarities which may be assigned to transcribers, there can be little doubt that the *Court of Love* belongs to the sixteenth century at the very earliest, while Mr. Brown himself admits that the MS. of the *Kingis Quair* may be approximately fixed at 1488.

Nothing can be more unsatisfactory than Mr. Brown's attempt to show that the poem breaks down in autobiographical details, and that it derives these details from Wyntown's *Chronicle*. James does not mention the exact year in which he was taken prisoner. He tells us that he commenced his voyage when the sun had begun to drive his course upward in the sign of Aries, that is, on or about the 12th of March—and that he had not far passed the state of innocence, "bot nere about the nowmer of zeris thre"—in

other words, that he was about ten years of age. Hereupon Mr. Brown, assuming that Wyntown gives the date of the King's birth correctly, proceeds to point out that the King was not at this time "about ten," but that he was about eleven and a half; and then asks triumphantly whether James would have been likely to forget his own age. Again, he contends that the King's capture could not have taken place in March, because it is highly probable that at the end of February, or at the beginning of March, the King was in the Tower. For the fact that he was in the Tower at that date there is not an iota of proof, or even of tolerably satisfactory presumptive evidence. How the author of the *Kingis Quair* could have been indebted to Wyntown's *Chronicle* for the autobiographical details it is, indeed, difficult to see. The poem gives March as the date of the capture; the *Chronicle* gives April. According to the poem, the King's age at the time of his capture was about ten; according to the *Chronicle*, about eleven and a half. The *Chronicle* gives the year of the capture; the poem does not. The *Chronicle* gives details not to be found in the poem; the poem details not to be found in the *Chronicle*. Mr. Brown has no authority whatever for asserting that Book IX. chap. xxv. of the *Chronicle* was certainly written years before James returned to Scotland. All we know about the *Chronicle* is that it was finished between the 3rd of

September, 1420, and the return of James in April, 1424.

Mr. Brown must forgive us for expressing regret that he should have wasted so much time and learning, in attempting to support a paradox which can only serve to perplex and mislead. Scholars, especially in these days, would do well to remember, that nothing can justify destructive criticism but a conscientious desire, on the part of those who apply it, to correct error and to discover truth. And they would also do well to ponder over Bacon's weighty words: "Like as many substances in Nature which are solid do putrify and corrupt into worms, so it is the property of good and sound knowledge to putrify and dissolve into a number of subtle, idle, unwholesome, and, as I may term them, vermiculate questions, which have indeed a kind of quickness and life of spirit, but no soundness of matter nor goodness of substance."

WILLIAM DUNBAR[1]

BOSWELL tells us that he once offered to teach Dr. Johnson the Scotch dialect, that the sage might enjoy the beauties of a certain Scotch pastoral poem, and received for his reply, "No, sir; I will not learn it. You shall retain your superiority by my not knowing it." It would not be true to say that Dr. Johnson's indifference to the Scotch language and to Scotch poetry has been shared by all cultivated Englishmen, but it has certainly been shared by a very large majority in every generation. The superb merit of many of the Scotch ballads, the lyrics of Burns and the novels of Scott have practically done little to diminish this majority and to induce English readers to acquire the knowledge which Dr. Johnson disdained. Nine Englishmen out of ten read Burns, either with an eye uneasily fishing the glossary at the bottom of the page, or *ad sensum*, that is, in contented ignorance of about three words in every nine.

[1] *William Dunbar*. By Oliphant Smeaton. Edinburgh: Oliphant.

And this is, perhaps, all that can reasonably be expected of the Southerner. Life is short; the world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion and Scotch manners is not, as Matthew Arnold observed, a lovely one, and the time which such an accomplishment would require would be far more profitably spent in acquiring, say, the language of Dante and Ariosto, or even the language of the *Romancero General* and of Cervantes. A modern reader may stumble, with more or less intelligence, through a poem of Burns, catching the general sense, enjoying the lilt, and even appreciating the niceties of rhythm. But this is not the case with the Scotch of the fifteenth century—the golden age of the vernacular poetry, the age when poets were writing thus:—

"Catyvis, wrechis, and ockeraris,
Hud-pykis, hurdaris, and gadderaris,
  All with that warlo went;
Out of thair throttis thay schot on udder
Hett moltin gold, me thocht, a fudder
  As fyre-flawcht, maist fervent,
Ay as thay tumit them of schot,
Feyndis fild thame new up to the thrott
  With gold of allkin prent."

The usual consequences have been the result of this ignorance. The Scotch have had it all their own way in estimating the merits of their vernacular classics, and the few outsiders whether English or German, who have made the Scotch language and literature a special

subject of study, have very naturally not been willing to underestimate the value of what it has cost them labour to acquire, and so have supported the exaggerated estimates of the Scotch themselves. What Voltaire so absurdly said of Dante, that his reputation was safe because no intelligent people read him, is literally true of such poets as Henryson, Douglas, and Dunbar. We simply take them on trust, and, as with most other things which are taken on trust, we seldom trouble ourselves about the titles and guarantees. It may be accepted as an uncontrolled truth that the world is always right, and very exactly right, in the long run. That mysterious tribunal which, resolved into the individuals which compose it, seems resolved into every conceivable source of ignorance, error, and folly, is ultimately infallible. There are no mismeasurements in the reputation of authors with whom readers of every class have been familiar for a hundred years. But, in the case of minor writers who appeal only to a minority, critical literature is the record of the most preposterous estimates. The history of the building up of these pseudo-reputations is generally the same in all cases. First we have the *obiter dictum* of some famous man whose opinion naturally carries authority, uttered, it may be, carelessly in conversation, or committed, without deliberation, to paper, in a letter or occasional trifle. Then comes some

little man, who takes up in deadly seriousness what the great man has said, and out comes, it may be, an essay or article. This wakes up some dreary pedant, who follows with an "edition" or "Study," which naturally elicits from some kindred spirit a sympathetic review. Thus the ball is set rolling, or, to change the figure, bray swells bray, echo answers to echo, and the thing is done. Meanwhile, all that is of real interest and importance in the author thus resuscitated is lost sight of; in advocating his factitious claims to attention his real claims are ignored. For the true point of view is substituted a false, and the whole focus of criticism, so to speak, is deranged. The first requisite in estimating the work and relative position of a particular author is the last thing which these enthusiasts seem to consider, that is, the application of standards and touchstones derived not simply from the study of the author himself, but from acquaintance with the principles of criticism, and with what is excellent in universal literature.

All this has been illustrated in the case of the poet who is the subject of the volume before us. As Mr. Ruskin has pronounced *Aurora Leigh* to be the greatest poem of this century, so Sir Walter Scott, who has, by the way, been singularly unjust to Lydgate and Hawes, pronounced Dunbar to be "a poet unrivalled by any that Scotland has ever produced." a

reckless judgment which he could never have expressed deliberately. Ellis followed suit, and in Ellis' notice Dunbar is "the greatest poet Scotland has produced." These judgments have, in effect, been reverberated by successive writers and editors. In due time, some fourteen years ago, appeared the inevitable German monograph, "William Dunbar: sein Leben und seine Gedichte," by Dr. J. Schipper, to whom Mr. Oliphant Smeaton appropriately and reverently inscribes the present monograph.

In Mr. Oliphant Smeaton's work Dunbar assumes the proportions which might be expected—he is a "mighty genius." "The peer, if not in a few qualities, the superior of Chaucer and Spenser. By the indefeasible passport of the supreme genius he has an indisputable title to the apostolic succession of British poetry to that place between Chaucer and Spenser, that place which can only be claimed by one whose genius was co-ordinate with theirs." As probably eight out of every ten of Mr. Smeaton's readers will know nothing more of Dunbar than what Mr. Smeaton chooses to tell them, and as we, considering the space at our disposal, cannot refute him by a detailed examination of Dunbar's works, it is fortunate that he has given us a succinct illustration of the value of his critical judgment. The following are four typical stanzas of a poem which Mr. Smeaton ranks with Milton's *Lycidas* and Shelley's

Adonais; we give them as Mr. Smeaton gives them, modernised :—

"I that in health was and gladness
Am troubled now with great sickness.
Enfeebled with infirmity,
Timor mortis conturbat me.

"Our pleasure here is all vain glory,
This false world is but transitory,
The flesh is brittle, the fiend is slee,
Timor mortis conturbat me.

"The state of man doth change and vary,
Now sound, now sick, now blyth, now sary
Now dancing merry, now like to dee,
Timor mortis conturbat me.

"No state on earth here stands sicker,
As with the wind waves the wicker,
So waves this world's vanity,
Timor mortis conturbat me."

As the following is pronounced to be one of the finest stanzas Dunbar ever penned, it is interesting as illustrating what is, in Mr. Smeaton's opinion, the best work of this rival of Chaucer and Spenser :—

'Have mercy, love, have mercy, lady bright;
What have I wrought against your womankeid,
That you should murder me a sackless wight,
Trespassing on you nor in word nor deed?
That ye consent thereto, O God forbid;
Leave cruelty and save your man for shame,
Or through the world quite losëd is your name."

It may be added that what are by far the finest

passages in Dunbar's poems are passed unnoticed and unquoted by Mr. Smeaton. Indeed, his acquaintance with Dunbar, or, at all events, his taste in selection, is exactly on a par with that of Ned Softley's with Waller. "As that admirable writer has the best and worst verses among our English poets, Ned," says Addison, "has got all the bad ones by heart, which he repeats upon occasion to show his reading." Should Mr. Smeaton ever meet his idol in Hades, we would in all kindness advise him to avoid an encounter; let him remember that the fulsome eulogy is his own, but that the verses quoted are the poet's. Attempted murder—so the irate shade might argue—is less serious than compulsory suicide.

Dunbar was undoubtedly a man of genius, but a reference to the poets who immediately preceded him will make large deductions from the praises lavished on him by his eulogists. He struck no new notes. *The Thistle and the Rose* and *The Golden Terge* are mere echoes of Chaucer and Lydgate, and, in some degree, of the author of *The King's Quair*, and are indeed full of plagiarisms from them. *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins* is probably little more than a faithful description of a popular mummery. His moral and religious poems had their prototypes, even in Scotland, in such poets as Johnston and Henryson. His most remarkable characteristic is his versatility, which ranges

from the composition of such poems as *The Merle and the Nightingale* to the *Twa Maryit Wemen and the Wedo*, from such lyrics as the *Meditation in Winter* to such lyrics as the *Plea for Pity*. Mr. Smeaton calls him "a giant in an age of pigmies." The author or authoress of *The Flower and the Leaf* was infinitely superior to him in point of style, Henryson was infinitely superior to him in originality, and Gavin Douglas at least his equal in power of expression and in description.

Let us do Dunbar the justice which Mr. Smeaton has not done him, and take him at his very best. Here is part of a picture of a May morning,—

"For mirth of May, wyth skippis and wyth hoppis
The birdis sang upon the tender croppis,
With curiouse notis, as Venus Chapell clerkis.
The rosis yong, new spreding of their knoppis,
War powderit brycht with hevinly beriall droppis;
Throu bemes rede, birnyng as ruby sperkis,
The skyes rang for schoutyng of the larkis."

This is brilliant and picturesque rhetoric touched into poetry by the "Venus Chapell clerkis," and the magical note in the last line; so too the touch in *The Golden Terge*, likening the faery ship to "blossom upon the spray." But in his allegorical poem he is too fond of the "quainte enamalit termes," and his verse has a certain metallic ring. It will be admitted, we suppose, that the best of his moral poems

would be *The Merle and the Nightingale* and "Be Merrie Man"; but the utmost which can be said for them is, that the philosophy is excellent and its expression adequate; that is, that they have little to distinguish them from hundreds of other poems of the same class.

In speaking of Dunbar's satires, Mr. Smeaton indulges himself in the following nonsense, "From the genial, jesting, and ironical incongruities of Horace and Persius we are introduced at once into the bitter, vitriolic scourgings of Juvenal," and in the following rhodomontade, telling us that they unite "the natural directness of Hall, the subtle depth of Donne, the delicate humour of Breton, the sturdy vigour of Dryden, the scalding, vitriolic bitterness of Swift, the pungency of Churchill, the rural smack of Gay, united to an approach at least to the artistic perfection of Pope." Stuff like this and indiscriminate eulogy are, no doubt, much easier to produce than an estimate of a writer's historical position and importance. Of the relation of Dunbar to his predecessors and contemporaries in England and Scotland, of his prototypes and models in French and Provençal literature, of the influence which he undoubtedly exercised on subsequent poetry, and especially on Spenser, Mr. Smeaton has nothing to say. It never seems to occur to him that his hero, like every one else, must have had his limitations, that "the many-sidedness of that genius

which has a ring"—the metaphors are not ours, but Mr. Smeaton's—"almost Shakespearian, about it," could hardly have been distinguished by uniformity of excellence; that "that painter of contemporary manners, who had all the vividness of a Callot, united to the broad humour of a Teniers and the minute touch of a Meissonier," who "reflected in his verse the most delicate *nuances*, as well as the most startling colours of the age wherein he lived," must have had degrees in success.

We have singled out this volume for special notice, not because of any intrinsic title it possesses to serious attention, but because it is typical of a species of literature which is rapidly becoming one of the pests of our time. While every encouragement should be given to sober, judicious, and competent reviews of our older writers, every discouragement should be given, out of respect to the dead, as well as in the interests of the living, to such books as the present. For they are as mischievous as they are ridiculous. They misinform; they mislead; they corrupt, or tend to corrupt, taste. After laying down a volume like this we feel, and we expect Dunbar would have felt, that there is something much more formidable than the old horror, "the candid friend," even that indicated by Tacitus—*pessimum inimicorum genus—laudantes.*

A GALLOP THROUGH ENGLISH LITERATURE[1]

THERE is a breeziness and hilarity, a gay irresponsibility and abandon, about M. Jusserand which is perfectly delightful. He is the very Autolycus of History and Criticism. What more sober students, who have some conscience to trouble them, are "toiling all their lives to find" appears to be his as a sort of natural right. The fertility of his genius is such, that it seems to blossom spontaneously into erudition. Like the lilies he toils not, but unlike the lilies he spins, and very pretty gossamer too. It is impossible to take him seriously.

The truth is that M. Jusserand belongs to a class of writers which, thanks to indulgent publishers, a more indulgent public, and most indulgent reviewers, is just now greatly in the ascendant. "Encyclopædical heads," who took all knowledge for their province, probably died

[1] *A Literary History of the English People from the Origins to the Renaissance.* By J. J. Jusserand.

with Bacon, but encyclopædical heads who take all Literature or all History for their province appear to be as common as the "excellence" which, in opposition to Matthew Arnold's opinion, the American lady maintained was so abundant on both sides of the Atlantic. These are the gentlemen who complacently sit down "to edit the Literatures of the world," or "to trace the development of the human race, from its picturesque cradle in the valleys of Central Asia, to its infinite ramifications in our own day"—within "the moderate compass of an octavo volume."

M. Jusserand's first feat is to dispose of some six centuries in ninety-three pages, in a narrative which simply tells over again, though certainly after a more jaunty fashion, what Ten Brink, Henry Morley, and others have told much more seriously, and, we may add, much more effectively. The Norman Conquest and an account of the Anglo-Norman literature occupy about a hundred and ten pages, while some eighty pages more, dealing with the fusion of the races and the gradual evolution of the English people and language, bring us to Chaucer. It might have been expected that M. Jusserand would have justified his survey of a period so often reviewed before, either by tracing, with more fulness and precision than his predecessors, the successive stages in the development of our nationality and its expression in literature,

or by adding to our knowledge of the characteristics and peculiarities of the literature itself. He has done neither. He has, on the contrary, obscured the first by the constant introduction of irrelevant matter, and he has apparently no notion of the relative importance of the authors on whose works he dilates or touches. Thus Richard Rolle of Hampole fills more space than Layamon, whose work is despatched in a page! Thus two lines in a note suffice for the *Ormulum*, two lines for Mannyng's *Handlyng of Synne*, a singularly interesting and significant work, ten lines for Robert of Gloucester, who is rather perplexingly described as "a distant ancestor of Gibbon and Macaulay," while four pages are accorded to *Tristan* and five to the *Roman du Renart*. How the Latin Chroniclers fare may be judged from the fact that a little more than a page serves for Geoffrey of Monmouth, a line for Ordericus Vitalis, and two for Giraldus Cambrensis. In the chapter on Chaucer M. Jusserand does more justice to his subject, and it is to be regretted for his own sake that he has not confined himself to such essays. He is never safe except when he is on the beaten path. Nothing could be more inadequate than the section on Gower. It certainly indicates that M. Jusserand is not very familiar with the *Confessio Amantis*. Not one word is said about the remarkable prologue, and to dismiss such a work in less than three pages, observing

that "it contains a hundred and twelve short stories, two or three of which are very well told, one, the adventure of Florent, being, perhaps, related even better than in Chaucer," is not quite what we should expect in a work purporting to narrate the "literary history of the English people." M. Jusserand has not even taken the trouble to keep pace with modern investigation in his subject, but actually tells us that Gower's *Speculum Meditantis* is lost! If Gower's writings are not of much intrinsic value, they are of immense importance from an historical point of view. John de Trevisa, a most important name in the history of English prose, is despatched in eight lines of mere bibliographical information, without a word being said about his great services to our literature, and without any reference being made either to the remarkable preface to his great work, or to his version of the Dialogue attributed to Occam.

The only satisfactory chapter in the book is the chapter dealing with Langland and his works; but it is certainly surprising that no account should be given of the very remarkable anonymous poem entitled *Piers Ploughman's Crede*. Again, whole departments of literature, such as the Metrical Romances, the Laies, Fabliaux, early lyrics and ballads, are most inadequately treated, some of the most memorable and typical being not even specified. Surely Minot was not a man to be dismissed, with a

flippant joke, in half a page, or *King Horn* and *Havelok* poems to be relegated to passing reference in a note.

But it is in dealing with the literature of the fifteenth century that M. Jusserand's superficiality and, to put it plainly, incompetence for his ambitious task become most deplorably apparent. In treating the earlier periods he had trustworthy guides even in common manuals, and he could not go far wrong in accepting their generalizations and statements. Books easily attainable, and indeed in everybody's hands, could enable him to dance airily through the Anglo-Saxon literature and through the period between Layamon and Chaucer. No one can now very well go wrong in Chaucer and his contemporaries, who has at his side some half-dozen works which any library can supply. But it is otherwise with the literature of the fifteenth century. Here, as every one who happens to have paid particular attention to it knows, popular manuals and histories are most misleading guides. Deterred, no doubt, by the prolixity of the poetry and by the comparatively uninteresting nature of the prose literature, modern historians and critics have contented themselves with accepting the verdicts of Warton and his followers, who probably had as little patience as themselves; and so a kind of conventional estimate has been formed, which appears and reappears in every

manual and handbook. We turned, therefore, with much curiosity to this portion of M. Jusserand's work. We had, we own, our suspicions about his first-hand knowledge of the literature through which he glided so easily in the earlier portions of his book, and here, we thought, would be the crucial test of his pretension to original scholarship. Would he do voluminous Lydgate the justice which, as the specialist knows, has so long been withheld from him? Would he point out the strong human interest of Hoccleve; the great historical interest of Hardyng; the power and beauty of the ballads; or, if he included Hawes within the century, would he show what a singularly interesting poem, intrinsically and historically, the *Pastime of Pleasure* really is? If, again, he included the Scotch poets, how would he deal with the problems presented by Huchown? Would he accord the proper tribute to the genius of Dunbar; would he estimate what poetry owes respectively to James I., Henry the Minstrel, Robert Henryson, and Gavin Douglas? In our prose literature, would he comment on the great importance of Pecock's memorable work, of Fortescue's two treatises, of the *Paston Letters*, of Caxton's various publications? How would he deal with the one "classical" work of the century, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*?

Now, of Lydgate, "to enumerate whose pieces," says Warton, "would be to write the

catalogue of a little library," it is not too much to say that he was one of the most richly gifted of our old poets, that as a descriptive poet he stands almost on the level of Chaucer, that his pictures of Nature are among the gems of their kind, that his pathos is often exquisite, "touching," as Gray said of him, "the very heart-strings of compassion with so masterly a hand as to merit a place among the greatest of poets." His humour is often delightful, and his pictures of contemporary life, such as his *London Lickpenny* and his *Prologue to the Storie of Thebes*, are as vivid as Chaucer's. In versatility he has no rival among his predecessors and contemporaries. Gray notices that, at times, he approaches sublimity. His style often is beautiful,—fluent, copious, and at its best eminently musical. The influence which he exercised on subsequent English and Scotch literature would alone entitle him to a prominent position in any history of English poetry. But the handbooks think otherwise, and he occupies just three pages in M. Jusserand's work, the only estimate of his work being confined to the assertion that "he was a worthy man if ever there was one, industrious and prolific," etc., and the only criticism is the remark that his "prosody was rather lax." And this is how poor Lydgate fares at our historian's hands. To Hoccleve are assigned just one page and a few lines. Hardyng figures only

in the bibliography at the bottom of a page. The ballads are despatched in fifteen lines. Hawes' *Pastime of Pleasure*, memorable alike both for the preciseness with which it marks the transition from the poetry of mediævalism to that of the Renaissance, for its probable influence on Spenser, and for its intrinsic charm, its pathos, its picturesqueness, and its sweet and plaintive music, is curtly dismissed, as the handbooks dismiss it, as "an allegory of unendurable dulness." If M. Jusserand would throw aside the manuals and turn to the original, he would probably see reason to modify his verdict. Our author's breathless gallop through the Scotch poets, to whom he allots nine pages, can only be regarded with silent astonishment by readers who happen to known anything about those most remarkable men. Huchown is not so much as mentioned. The amazing nonsense which he writes in summing up Dunbar, we will transcribe, *ut ex uno discas omnia*:

"Dunbar, with never-flagging spirit, attempts every style. . . . His flowers are too flowery, his odours too fragrant; by moments it is no longer a delight, but almost a pain. It is not sufficient that his birds should sing; they must sing among perfumes, and these perfumes are coloured."

Has M. Jusserand ever read *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins, The Twa Maryit Wemen and the Wedo*, and the minor poems of Dunbar? If he has, would he pronounce that these "flowers" are "too flowery"—these "odours" "too fra-

grant," or would he feel the absurdity of generalizing on ludicrously insufficient knowledge? His verdicts on the other Scotch poets are marked by the same superficiality, and we regret to add flippancy. To class Henryson among poets whose style is "florid" and whose roses are "splendid but too full-blown" is to show that M. Jusserand knows as little about him as he seems to know about Dunbar. In all Henryson's poems there are only three short passages which could by any possibility be described as florid. The prose of the fifteenth century fares even worse at his hands. Capgrave is mentioned only in the bibliography! Of the interest and importance of Pecock, historically and intrinsically, he appears to have no conception; on the real significance of the *Repressor* he never even touches, and how indeed could he in the less than one page which is assigned to one of the most remarkable writers in the fifteenth century? A page suffices for the *Paston Letters,* and four lines for Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*!

Now we would ask M. Jusserand, in all seriousness, what possible end can be served by a book of this kind, except the encouragement of everything that is detestable to the real scholar: superficiality, want of thoroughness, and false assumption, and what is more, the public dissemination of error, and of crude and misleading judgments. Such a work as the present, the

soundness and trustworthiness of which ninety-nine readers in every hundred must necessarily take for granted, can only be justified when it proceeds from one who is a master of his immense subject, from one whose generalizations are based on amply sufficient knowledge, whose suppressions and omissions spring neither from carelessness nor from ignorance, but from discrimination, and in whose statements and judgments implicit reliance can be placed. To none of these qualifications has M. Jusserand the smallest pretension.

We have no wish to seem discourteous to M. Jusserand or to say anything which can cause him annoyance, but it is no more than simple duty in any critic with a becoming sense of responsibility to discountenance in every way the production of such books as these. They are not only mischievous in themselves, but they form precedents for books which are more mischievous still. We like M. Jusserand's enthusiasm, but we would exhort him to reduce the flatulent dimensions, which his ambition has here so unhappily assumed, to that more tempered ambition which gave us the monographs on Piers Ploughman and on the Tudor novelists.

DE QUINCEY AND HIS FRIENDS[1]

TO a thoughtful reader there is, perhaps, no sadder spectacle than those sixteen volumes which represent all that remains to us of Thomas De Quincey. What superb powers, what noble and manifold gifts, what capacity for invaluable and imperishable achievements had Nature lavished on this extraordinary man! Metaphysics might for all time have been a debtor to that vigorous, acute, and subtle intellect, at once so speculative and logical, so inquisitive and discriminating. Æsthetic criticism might have found in him a second Lessing, and literary criticism a superior Sainte-Beuve. For, in addition to all that would have enabled him to excel in abstract thought, he had—and in ample measure—the qualities which make men consummate critics: rare power of analysis, the nicest perception, sensibility,

[1] *Personal Recollections, Souvenirs, and Anecdotes of Thomas De Quincey and his Friends and Associates.* Written and collected by James Hogg.

sympathy, good taste, good sense, immense erudition. He might have contributed masterpieces to Theology, to History, to Economic Science. But they know not his name. He has set his seal on nothing but on English style. About a hundred and fifty articles contributed to magazines and encyclopædias, some of them of a high order of literary merit, many of them simply worthless, the majority of them containing what is inferior so disproportionately in excess of what is valuable that they may be likened to dustbins, with jewels here and there glittering among the rubbish ;—this is what represents him. It is as a master of style, by virtue of what he accomplished as a rhetorician and prose poet only, that he will live. But this, comparatively scanty as it is, is of pre-eminent, of unique value, and will suffice to secure him a place for ever among the classics of English prose. He has also another claim, if not to our reverence, at least to our curious attention and interest,—and that attention and interest he can scarcely fail to excite in every generation,—his autobiographical writings give us a picture, and that with fascinating power, of one of the most extraordinary personalities on record.

Indiscriminating admiration is among the most pleasing traits of youth, but in men of mature years it loses its attractiveness. When it is no longer the effervescence of juvenile enthusiasm for which all make allowance, it becomes, like

the levities of boyhood affected in middle life, merely vapid folly. In relation to its object it not only defeats its own ends, but is apt to make recipient and donor alike ridiculous. Nor is this all. By some curious law of association which we cannot pretend to explain, its almost inevitable ally is dulness, and dulness of a peculiarly wearisome and exasperating kind. During the last few years these peculiarities have become so alarmingly epidemic that it really seems high time to form, on the principle of Mr. Morris's Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments, a Society for the Preservation of Literary Reputations. When those "of whom to be dispraised were no small praise" take to eulogy and editing, an unhappy Classic may well look to his true friends. It is nothing less than appalling to behold the mountains of rubbish now gradually accumulating over the work—the real work—of such poets as Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats; rubbish of their own, rescued with cruel industry from the oblivion to which they would themselves have consigned it, rubbish of their commentators and editors, dulness and inanity unutterable. "What, sir," asked an Eton boy of Foote, "was the best thing you ever said?" "Well," was the reply, "I once saw a chimney-sweep on a high prancing, high-mettled horse. 'There,' said I, 'goes Warburton on Shakespeare." But it is not in the Warburtons, not in the chimney-sweepers, that the mischief lies; it is in

those who may be called the scavengers and sextons of literature, in those who, utterly unable to discern between what is precious and what is worthless in a man's work, thrust all, without distinction, into prominence, and thus not only enable an author to "write himself down," but, by their indiscriminating eulogies, assist him in his suicide. The subtlest form, indeed, which detraction can assume is over-praise, for a man is thus forced to give the lie to his own reputation.

No one, perhaps, has suffered so much from ill-judging admirers as De Quincey. If ever an author needed a judicious adviser, when preparing his works for publication in a permanent form, and a judicious editor, when the time had come for that final edition on which his title to future fame should rest, it was the English opium-eater. But, unhappily, he had no such adviser in his lifetime, and he has had no such editor since. He consequently reprinted much which ought never to have been reprinted at all, and he omitted to reprint some things which would have done honour to him. His besetting faults, even in his vigour, were loquacity and silliness, a habit of "drawing out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument"—a tendency to peddle and dawdle, as well as to indulge in a sort of pleasantry, so attenuated as to border closely on inanity. As he grew older these habits became more confirmed.

His puerility and garrulousness in his later writings are often intolerable. But this was not the worst. In revising some of his earlier papers, and particularly the *Confessions*, he not only imported into them tiresome irrelevancies and superfluities, but, in emending, ruined the glorious passages on which his fame as a rhetorician and prose poet rests; such has been the fate, among others, of the exquisite description of the powers of opium,—the superb passage beginning, "The town of L . . represented the earth with its sorrows and its graves,"[1] and of the dreams in the second part of the *Confessions*, particularly of the sublime one beginning, "The dream commenced with a music."[2]

Mr. James Hogg tells us that his design in publishing the present volume was that he might "place a stone upon the cairn of the man" who had treated him "with an almost paternal tenderness." We sincerely sympathize with Mr. Hogg's pious intention, but we submit that the truest kindness which he, or any other admirer of De Quincey could do him, would be not to augment but to lighten the cairn which indiscreet admirers are so industriously piling over him. To change the figure, the best service which could be rendered to De Quincey would be to relieve him of his superfluous baggage, not

[1] See Works. Black's Edit., Vol. I. p. 212, compared with original Edit., pp. 113–114.

[2] *Id.*, p. 272 and original Edit., pp. 177–178.

to add to it. His fame would stand much higher, if his sixteen volumes were vigorously weeded; if the sweepings and refuse of his study, so injudiciously given to the world by Dr. Japp and Mr. Hogg, were given instead to the flames; and if reminiscents and biographers would only leave him to tell, in his own fashion, his own story, especially as it is one of those stories the interest of which depends purely on the telling. We have already expressed our sympathy with Mr. Hogg's pious intention. It only remains for us to express our regret that Mr. Hogg's piety should have taken the form of the most barefaced piece of book-making which we ever remember to have met with. Addison, if we are not mistaken, somewhere describes a man to whom a single volume afforded all the amusement and variety of a whole library, for, by the time he had arrived at the middle, he had completely forgotten the beginning, and when he arrived at the end, he had completely forgotten the whole. Mr. Hogg appears to proceed on the assumption that it is pretty much the same with the public and its memory, that its capacity for amusement is permanent, but that its recollection of what has amused it is so treacherous, that repetition will be sure to have all the attraction of novelty. This is, no doubt, unhappily true. But it is a truth which no critic has a right to concede.

All that is of interest in this volume is little

more than the literal reproduction, in another shape, of material embodied in a Life of De Quincey, published by Dr. Alexander Japp, under the pseudonym of H. A. Page, in 1877. Its exact composition is as follows. Eliminating the preface and the index, the book consists of 359 pages. Of these, seventy consist of a dreary *réchauffé* by Dr. Japp himself of his own Life of De Quincey, and of the additional information contained in his edition of the Posthumous Works. Next comes a series of reminiscences, extracted from Dr. Japp's Life, from Dr. Garnett's edition of the *Confessions*, from the *Quarterly Review*, and from other sources all equally accessible. Then Mr. Hogg himself opens fire with *Days and Nights with De Quincey*. An essay—"On the supposed Scriptural Expression for Eternity"—excellently illustrating De Quincey in his senility, is reprinted, with awe-struck admiration, from the American edition of his works.

For the purpose, presumably, of adding to the bulk of the book, Moir's ballad, *De Quincey's Revenge*, is included, though its sole connection with De Quincey is, that it deals with a legend concerning the possible ancestors of a possible branch of his possible family. Then we have one of Mr. Shadworth Hodgson LL.D.'s *Outcast Essays*, "On the genius of De Quincey," the reason for the hospitable entertainment of the outcast being by no means apparent. Among

other dreary trifles is a reprint of a Latin theme, one of De Quincey's college exercises. As Mr. Hogg has chosen to reprint and translate this, it would have been as well to print and translate it correctly. "Quæ ansibus obstant" should, of course, have been "ausibus," and "oculi perstringuntur" cannot possibly mean "are spell bound," but "are dazzled."

The republication of these pieces was, we repeat, a great mistake, another lamentable illustration of the cruel wrong which officious and ill-judging admirers may inflict on a writer's reputation. Talleyrand once observed that, a wise man would be safer with a foolish than with a clever wife, for a foolish wife could only compromise herself, but a clever wife might compromise her husband. Substituting 'unambitious' for 'foolish' and 'ambitious' for 'clever,' we are very much inclined to apply the same remark to a great writer and his friends. It requires a Johnson to support a Boswell, and a Goethe to support an Eckermann.

LEE'S *LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE* [1]

IT is a pleasure to turn from the slovenly and perfunctory work, from the plausible charlatanry and pretentious incompetence which it has so often been our unwelcome duty to expose in these columns, to such a volume as the volume before us. It is books like these which retrieve the honour of English scholarship. A wide range of general knowledge, immense special knowledge, scrupulous accuracy, both in the investigation and presentation of facts, the sound judgment, the tact, the insight which in labyrinths of chaotic traditions and conflicting testimony can discern the clue to probability and truth—these are the qualifications indispensable to a successful biographer of Shakespeare. And these are the qualifications which Mr. Lee possesses, in larger measure than have been possessed by any one who has essayed the task which he has here undertaken. A ranker and more tangled jungle than that presented by the traditions, the apocrypha, the theories, the conjectures which have gradually accumulated

[1] *A Life of Shakespeare.* By Sidney Lee.

round the memory of Shakespeare since the time of Rowe, could scarcely be conceived. In this jungle some, like Charles Knight, have altogether lost themselves; others, like Joseph Hunter, have struck out vigorously into wrong tracks, and floundered into quagmires. Halliwell Phillipps, sure-footed and wary though he was, certainly had not the clue to it. But Mr. Lee, who can plainly say with Comus,—

> "I know each lane, and every alley green
> Dingle or bushy dell of this wild wood,
> And every bosky bourne from side to side,
> My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood,"

has thridded it, and taught others to thrid it, as no one else has done. And he will have his reward. He has produced what deserves to be, and what will probably become, the standard life of our great national poet.

Mr. Lee's book is substantially a reproduction of his article on Shakespeare, contributed to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the high merits of which have long been recognised by scholars; and he has certainly done well to make that article popularly accessible by reprinting it in a separate form. But the present volume is not a mere reproduction of his contribution to the Dictionary; it is much more. He has here filled out what he could there sketch only in outline; what he could there state only as results and conclusions, he here illustrates and justifies by corroboration and

proof. He has, moreover, both in the text and in the appendices, brought together a great mass of interesting and pertinent collateral matter which the scope of the Dictionary necessarily precluded.

More than a century ago George Steevens wrote : " All that can be known with any degree of certainty about Shakespeare is that he was born at Stratford-on-Avon, married and had children there, went to London, where he commenced actor, wrote poems and plays, returned to Stratford, made his will, died, and was buried there." And, if we set aside probable inferences, this is all we do know of any importance about his life. His pedigree cannot certainly be traced beyond his father. Nothing is known of the place of his education—that he was educated at the Stratford Grammar School is pure assumption. His life between his birth and the publication of *Venus and Adonis* in 1593, is an absolute blank. It is at least doubtful whether the supposed allusion to him in Greene's *Groat's Worth of Wit*, and in Chettle's *Kind Heart's Dream* have any reference to him at all ; it is still more doubtful whether the William Shakespeare of Adrian Quiney's letter, or of the Rogers and Addenbroke summonses, or the William Shakespeare who was assessed for property in St. Helens, Bishopsgate, was the poet. We know practically nothing of his life in London, or of the date of his arrival in London ; we are

ignorant of the date of his return to Stratford, of his happiness or unhappiness in married life, of his habits, of his last days, of the cause of his death. Not a sentence that fell from his lips has been authentically recorded. At least one-half of the alleged facts of his biography is as purely apocryphal as the life of Homer attributed to Herodotus.

But probability, as Bishop Butler says, is the guide of life, and on the basis of probability may be raised, it must be owned, a fairly satisfactory biography. Mr. Lee has not been able to contribute any new facts to Shakespeare's life, which is certainly not his fault; but he has given us a recapitulation, as lucid as it is exhaustive, of all that the industry of successive generations of memorialists from Ben Jonson to Halliwell Phillipps has succeeded in accumulating, and he has been as judicious in what he has rejected as in what he has adopted. From the curse of the typical Shakespearian biographer—we mean the statement of mere inference and hypothesis as fact—he is absolutely free. He has done excellent service in giving, if not finishing, at least swashing blows to the monstrous fictions of the theorists on the sonnets, particularly to the Fitton-Pembroke mare's nest, fictions which have been gradually generating a Shakespeare, as purely apocryphal as the Roland of the song or the Apollonius of Philostratus.

Mr. Lee's most remarkable contribution to

speculative Shakespearian criticism, in which, we are glad to say, he does not often indulge, is his contention that the W. H. of the dedication to the sonnets was William Hall, a small piratical stationer. It is never wise to speak positively on what must necessarily be, till certain evidence is obtainable, a matter of speculation. But we are very much inclined to think that Mr. Lee's contention has at least something in its favour. Our readers will remember that one of the chief points in the enigma of the sonnets is the dedication, and it runs thus: "To the onlie begetter of these ensuing Sonnets, Mr. W. H., all happiness and that eternitie promised by our ever-living poet wisheth the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth. T. T." It has generally been assumed that the "W. H." is the youth who is the hero of the first group of sonnets, and the poet's friend, and he has commonly been identified either with William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, or with Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton. The difficulties in the way of either hypothesis—and on each hypothesis not Babels merely, but cities of Babels have been raised—are to an unprejudiced mind insurmountable. Mr. Lee maintains with plausible ingenuity, but not, we think, conclusively, that there is no proof that the youth of the sonnets was named "Will" at all. His analysis of the "Will" sonnets is a masterpiece of subtle ingenuity, and well deserves careful attention.

He then proceeds to adopt the theory that the word "begetter" is not to be taken in the sense of "inspirer," but simply as "procurer" or "obtainer" of the sonnets for T. T., *i.e.*, the publisher, Thomas Thorpe. In other words, that Thorpe dedicated the sonnets to W. H., in return for W. H. having piratically obtained them for him. This is at least doubtful. In the first place it may reasonably be questioned whether "begetter" could have the meaning which is here assigned to it; the passages quoted from *Hamlet* ("acquire and beget a temperance") and from Dekker's *Satiro-mastix*, "I have some cousins german at Court shall beget you the reversion of the Master of the King's Revels," are anything but conclusive. Still, Thorpe, who is by no means remarkable for the purity of his English, may have used it in the sense which Mr. Lee's theory requires.

Shakespeare's sonnets, as is well known, were circulating among his friends in manuscript, and Mr. Lee has discovered that one William Hall was well known as an Autolycus among publishers, and had already edited, under the initials W. H., a collection of poems left by the Jesuit poet, Southwell—in other words had already done for the publisher, George Eld, what it is assumed that he now did for Thomas Thorpe. Mr. Lee's theory is, it must be admitted, plausible, and few would hesitate to pronounce it far more probable than the theory which

would identify the enigmatical initials with the names of Pembroke or Southampton.

The chapters dealing with the sonnets are, in our opinion the most valuable contribution which has ever been made to this important province of Shakespearian study, and it may be said of Mr. Lee, as Porson said of Bentley, that we may learn more from him when he is wrong than from many others when they are right. His contention is, and it is supported with exhaustive erudition, that these poems are, in the main, a concession to the fashion, then so much in vogue, of sonnet writing; that their themes are the conventional themes treated in those compositions; that some of them were dedicated to Southampton, that some may be autobiographical, but that they are wholly miscellaneous, and tell no consecutive story, as so many critics have erroneously assumed. We cannot accept all Mr. Lee's theories and conclusions, but one thing is certain, that they are supported with infinitely more skill and learning than any other theories which have been broached on this hopelessly baffling problem.

We will conclude by noticing what seem to us slight blemishes in this admirable work. There is nothing to warrant the assertion on p. 158 that most of Shakespeare's sonnets were produced in 1594, which is to cut the knot of a most difficult question. Indeed, with respect to the whole question of the sonnets, Mr. Lee is, we venture

to submit, a little too dogmatic. It is a question which no one can settle as positively as Mr. Lee seems to settle it. There is surely no good, or even plausible reason for doubting the authenticity of *Titus Andronicus*, whatever innumerable Shakespearian critics may say, external and internal evidence alike being almost conclusive for its genuineness. There is nothing to warrant the supposition that Shakespeare was on bad terms with his wife. The famous bequest in his Will was probably a delicate compliment, and we are surprised that Mr. Lee should not have noticed this. Among the testimonies to Shakespeare in the seventeenth century, Mr. Lee should have recorded that of Archbishop Sharp, who, according to Speaker Onslow, used to say "that the Bible and Shakespeare had made him Archbishop of York."

Mr. Lee must also forgive us for adding that, in this work at least, æsthetic criticism is not his strong point, and he would have done well to keep it within even narrower bounds than he has done. Many of those who would be the first to admire his erudition and the other scholarly qualities which are so conspicuous in every chapter of his book, will, we fear, take exception to much of his criticism, especially in relation to the sonnets. It is too positive; it is unsympathetic; it is too mechanical. But our debt to Mr. Lee is so great, that we feel almost ashamed to make any deductions in our tribute of gratitude.

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS[1]

THERE goes a story that an ingenuous youth, who had the privilege of an introduction to Lord Beaconsfield, resolved to make the best of the occasion, by extracting, if possible, from that astute political sage the secret of success in life. It might take the form, he thought, of a little practical advice. For that advice, explaining the object with which it was asked, he accordingly applied. "Yes," said Lord Beaconsfield, "I think I can give you some advice which may possibly be of use to you. Never trouble yourself about The Man in the Iron Mask, and never get into a discussion about the authorship of the Letters of Junius." In all seriousness we think it is high time that the "closure" should be

[1] *The Mystery of Shakespeare's Sonnets: an attempted Elucidation.* By Cuming Walters. *Testimony of the Sonnets as to the Authorship of the Shakespearian Plays and Poems.* By Jesse Johnson. *Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered and in part Re-arranged, with Introductory Chapters, Notes and a Reprint of the Original* 1609 *Edition.* By Samuel Butler.

applied to a debate on another "mystery" of which every one must be tired to death, except perhaps those who contribute to it. If some progress could be made towards the solution of the Mystery of Shakespeare's Sonnets, if there was the faintest indication of any dawn on the darkness, even the wearied reviewer would be patient. But the thing remains exactly where it was, before this appalling literary epidemic set in. During the last three or four years scarcely a month has passed without its "monograph," many of these treatises, mere replicas of their predecessors, differing only in degrees of stupidity and uselessness. Mr. Cuming Walters' volume, sensible enough and intelligent, we quite concede, simply thrashes the straw. It professes to be an original contribution to the question. There is not a view or theory in it, which is not now a platitude to every one who has had the patience to follow this controversy. It analyses the Sonnets; they have been analysed hundreds of times. It asks who was W. H.; it answers the question as it has been answered *usque ad nauseam.* It discusses the dark lady, and lands us in the same shifting quagmire of opinion in which Mr. Tyler and his coadjutors and opponents have been floundering for the last four years. It assumes, it rejects, it questions, it suggests, what has been assumed, rejected, questioned, and suggested over and over again. Indeed, it may now be said with literal truth that, unless

some fresh discovery is made, nothing new, whether in the way of absurdity or sense, can be advanced on this subject. But books are multiplied with such rapidity and in such prodigious numbers in these days, that they thrive, like cannibals, on one another. The last comer is simply its forgotten predecessor in disguise.

But platitude is the very last charge that can be brought against Mr. Jesse Johnson's contribution to the curiosities of Shakespearian criticism. The theory advanced here is, that Shakespeare never wrote the Sonnets at all, that he was quite unequal to their composition, that the author of them "was probably fifty, perhaps sixty, and that he was besides a man of genius, which Shakespeare certainly was not. I would not," says Mr. Jesse Johnson, "deny to Shakespeare great talent. His success in and with theatres certainly forbids us to do so. That he had a bent or a talent for rhyming or for poetry, an early and persistent tradition and the inscription over his grave indicate. And otherwise there could hardly have been attributed to him so many plays, besides those written by the author of the Sonnets." Shakespeare may have been equal to trifles like *Hamlet* or *Lear*—for Mr. Jesse Johnson would be the last to dispute the claim made for Shakespeare as a hard-working playwright clearing his twenty-five thousand dollars a year (Mr. Jesse Johnson is calculating his income according to the present

time)—but "to Shakespeare working as an actor, adapter or perhaps author came a very great poet, one who outclassed all the writers of that day, and it is the poetry of that great unknown which, flowing into Shakespeare's work, comprises all or nearly all of it which the world treasures or cares to remember." If we told Mr. Jesse Johnson, and all who resemble Mr. Jesse Johnson, the truth about their productions, we are quite certain of one thing—but the one thing of which we are certain it would, perhaps, be good taste in us to leave unsaid.

Of a very different order is Mr. Samuel Butler's *Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered.* This is the work of a scholar, but of a scholar mounted on a hobby-horse of unusually vigorous mettle. Mr. Butler begins with a tremendous onslaught on the theories of the Southamptonites, the Herbertists and the anti-autobiographical party; and in this part of his work he has certainly much to say which is both pertinent and plausible, nay, in our opinion, convincing. But he is less successful in construction than in demolition. His own contention is, that the Sonnets are undoubtedly autobiographical, and very derogatory to Shakespeare's moral character. He is satisfied that "Mr. W. H." was the youth who inspired them, not the youth who simply collected, or procured them, and gave them to Thorpe, but that this youth was neither the Earl of Southampton nor the Earl of Pembroke,

nor, indeed, any one of superior social rank to the poet, though this has always been assumed. Adopting the theory of Tyrwhitt and Malone that the key to the youth's name is to be found in the seventh line of the twentieth sonnet,—

"A man in hew all *Hewes* in his controlling."

and deducing, with them, from Sonnets cxxxv., cxxxvi. and cxliii. that the youth's Christian name was William, Mr. Butler believes, as they did, that the youth's name was William Hughes, or Hewes; and Mr. Butler is inclined to identify him, though he speaks, of course, by no means confidently, with a William Hughes, who served as steward in the *Vanguard*, *Swiftsure* and *Dreadnought*, and who died in March, 1636–7. Mr. Butler supports his theories with hypotheses which an impartial judge of evidence will find it difficult to concede. In the face of Sonnets xxxvi., xxxvii. and cxxiv. the contention that the youth was not in a superior social station to the poet cannot be maintained with any confidence. There are still graver difficulties in the way of supposing that the Sonnets were written between January, 1585–6 and December, 1588. That they could be the work of a young man between his twenty-first and his twenty-fourth year, and have preceded by some four years the composition of *Venus and Adonis* and the *Rape of Lucrece*, is simply incredible; but it is a question which cannot be argued, for we have

nothing but mere hypothesis to go upon. Mr. Butler's arrangement and interpretation of the Sonnets are, moreover, purely fanciful. When Mr. Butler would have us believe that some of the Sonnets in the second group, from cxxvii. to clii., are addressed to and concern not the woman, but the youth, he asks us to accept a theory which is not only revolting, but which sets all probability at defiance. Similarly absurd, he must forgive us for saying, is his grotesquely repulsive interpretation of Sonnet xxxiv. Nor is there anything to justify the interpretation placed on Sonnets xxxiii. and xxxiv. or the collocation of cxxi. All that can be said for Mr. Butler's exceedingly ingenious and admirably argued theory is, that it supports a view of the question which, if it admits of no positive confutation, produces no conviction. No theory, based on an arbitrary arrangement of these poems and on positive deductions drawn, or rather strained, from most ambiguous evidence and from pure hypotheses, can possibly be satisfactory.

The problem presented in these Sonnets is undoubtedly the most fascinating problem in all literature, and it is as exasperating as it is fascinating. It appears to be so simple, it seems constantly to be on the verge of its solution, and yet the moment we get beyond a certain point in inquiry, the more complex its apparent simplicity is discovered to be, the more

hopeless all prospect of explaining the enigma. Take the difficulty of assuming, what seems to be obvious, that they are autobiographical. Here we have the poet, and that poet Shakespeare, admitting the world into the innermost secrets of his life, taking his contemporaries, without the least reserve, into his confidence, inviting and assisting them to the study of his own morbid anatomy, and, in a word, stripping himself bare with all the shameless abandon of Jean Jacques and of Casanova. Everything that we know of Shakespeare seems to discountenance the probability of his having any such intention. No anecdote, with the smallest pretence to authenticity, couples his name with scandal. The theory which identifies him with the W. S. of Willobie's *Avisa* has no real basis to rest on, and without corroboration is absolutely inadmissible as evidence. Whatever Shakespeare's private life may have been, it is quite clear that he carefully regarded the decencies, and would have been the last man in the world to pose publicly in the character presented to us in the Sonnets. If the poems are autobiographical, we can only conclude that they were published without his consent, and even to his great annoyance. This may certainly have been the case, and is indeed often assumed to have been so. But even then it is, to say the least, curious, that there should have been no tradition about the extraordinary

story which they tell, especially considering the distinction of the *dramatis personæ.* Assuming that the youth, who is their hero, was a real person, he must, judging from Sonnets xxxvi., xxxvii. and cxxiv., have been conspicuous in the society of that time; assuming the rival poet to be a real person, he must have been equally conspicuous in another sphere, while Shakespeare himself, at the time the Sonnets were published, was the most distinguished poet and playwright in London. It is, therefore, extraordinary that all traces of an affair in which persons of so much eminence were involved, and which would have furnished scandal-mongers with the topics in which such gossips most delight, should have entirely disappeared. We must either conclude that posterity has been very unfortunate in the loss of records which would have thrown light on the matter, or that Shakespeare's contemporaries knew nothing of the facts, and contented themselves with the poetry; or, lastly, that what we may call the fable of the Sonnets, the drama in which W. H., "the dark lady," and the rival poet play their parts, is as fictitious as the plot of *The Midsummer Night's Dream* or *The Tempest.*

It is not our intention to support any of the numerous theories which pretend to give us the key to these Sonnets, still less to propose any new one, but simply to show that the enigma presented by them is as insoluble as ever, and

that all attempts to throw light on it have served to effect nothing more than to make darkness visible and confusion worse confounded. Let us briefly review the facts. In 1609, Thomas Thorpe, a well-known Elizabethan bookseller, published a small quarto volume, entitled *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, having apparently not obtained them from the poet himself, and to this volume was prefixed the following dedication:—"To the onlie begetter of these ensuing Sonnets, Mr. W. H., all happiness and that eternitie promised by our ever-living poet wisheth the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth. T. T." Here begins and ends all that is certainly known about W. H. and his relation to these poems. No one knows who he was; no one knows what is exactly meant by the word "begetter," whether it is to be taken in the sense of inspirer, whether that is to say W. H. is the youth celebrated in the Sonnets—"the master-mistress" of the poet's passion, or whether it simply means the person who got or procured the poems for Thorpe,—in which case the identification of the initials is of no consequence, unless we are to suppose that the youth who inspired them presented them to Thorpe. Mr. Sidney Lee, in his very able paper in the *Fortnightly Review* for February, 1898, and in his Life of Shakespeare, argues that there is no proof that the youth of the Sonnets was named "Will," though this has always been assumed to be the case.

The evidence on which the point must be argued will be found in the puns on "Will" in Sonnets cxxxiv.–vi. and cxliii. It seems to us, we must own, that the balance of probability, though not certainly in favour of the affirmative, decidedly inclines towards it. Granting then,—for it is, after all, only an hypothesis,—that the initials W. H. are those of the youth celebrated in the Sonnets, to whom are they to be assigned? The youth, whoever he was, is represented as being in a social position superior to that of the poet; he has apparently rank and title; he has wealth; he is young and eminently handsome, his beauty being of a delicate, effeminate cast; he is highly cultivated and accomplished; he is on terms of the closest intimacy with the poet, by whom he is passionately beloved; he lives a free, loose life, and he intrigues with his friend's mistress.

Passing by all preposterous theories about William Harte, William Hughes, William Himself and the like, we come to the two names which seem worth serious consideration, William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, and Henry Wriothesly, third Earl of Southampton. The Pembroke theory, with Mr. Thomas Tyler's corollary identifying the "dark lady" with Mary Fitton, has been adopted by Dr. Brandes in his work on Shakespeare just published. But the difficulties in the way of accepting it are insuperable. They have been admirably dis-

cussed by Mr. Sidney Lee in the article to which we have referred. In the first place, while Shakespeare must have been on terms of more than brotherly intimacy with the youth of the Sonnets, there is no evidence at all that he had ever been in any other relation with the Earl than in the ordinary one of servant and patron. The words of Heminge and Condell, in the dedication of the first folio to Pembroke and his brother, merely state that they had both of them "prosequted" him with favour; in other words, been to him what they had been to many other dramatists and men of letters; and that is the only evidence of any connection between Shakespeare and Pembroke. Tradition was certainly silent about any relations between them, for Aubrey, as Mr. Lee has pointed out, though he has collected much information about both, says nothing about their acquaintanceship, though he mentions Pembroke's connection with Massinger, and Southampton's with Shakespeare. But Thorpe's dedication is conclusive against Pembroke. In 1609, Pembroke, who had succeeded to the title on the death of his father in January, 1601, was Lord Chamberlain, a Knight of the Garter, and one of the most distinguished noblemen in England. Is it credible that Thorpe would address him as Mr. W. H., more especially as in the other works which he inscribed to him,—and he inscribed several,—he is careful to give him all

his titles, and to address him with the most fulsome servility? Again, Pembroke, as Mr. Lee points out, was never a "Mister" at all. As the eldest son of an earl, he was designated by courtesy Lord Herbert, and as Lord Herbert he is always spoken of in contemporary records. The appellation "Mr." was not, as Mr. Lee observes, used loosely, as it is now, and could never have been applied to any nobleman, whether holding his title by right or by courtesy. Whatever allowance may be made for a poet's passion and fancy, some weight must be attached to the insistence made in the Sonnets on the youth's delicate and effeminate beauty. It is true that we have no portraits of Pembroke before he arrived at middle age, but those portraits justify us in concluding that he could never, at any time, have been distinguished by beauty of the type indicated in the poems.

Against all this the advocates of the Pembroke theory have nothing to place but conjectures, a series of insignificant coincidences and the assumption that the woman in the Sonnets is to be identified with the woman who bore Herbert a child, Mary Fitton. The publication of Sonnet xliv. by Jaggard, in 1599, shows that the intrigue between the youth and the dark lady, which is the central event of the Sonnets, was already, and had probably been for some time, in full career, while there is no evidence that Pem-

broke was involved with Mary Fitton before the summer of 1600. But what finally disposes of this theory is the testimony afforded by Lady Newdigate-Newdegate's recently published *Gossip from a Muniment Room.* Indispensable requisites in the lady of the Sonnets are, that she should be dark, a "black beauty" with "eyes raven black," with hair which resembles "black wires," and that she should be a married woman; but the portraits—and there are two of them—of Mary Fitton, show that she had a fair complexion, with brown hair and grey eyes; and she remained unmarried, until long after her connection with Pembroke had ceased.

The theory which identifies W. H. with the Earl of Southampton is slightly more plausible, but the difficulties in the way of accepting it are, in truth, equally insuperable. This theory has at least one great point in its favour. Shakespeare was acquainted, and it may be inferred intimately acquainted, with Southampton, as the dedications of *Venus and Adonis* and the *Rape of Lucrece* indicate. Of his affection and respect for this nobleman he has left an expression almost as remarkable as the language of the sonnets. "The love I dedicate to your lordship is without end. . . . What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours: being part in all I have devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duty would show greater." This bears a singularly close resemblance to Sonnet xxvi.,—

" Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
To thee I send this written embassage
To witness duty, not to show my wit,
Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it."

And there is much in the Sonnets which can be made to coincide with what we know of Southampton. But, as we push inquiry, difficulties of all kinds begin to swarm in on us. The first is, as in the case of Pembroke, with the dedication. To say nothing of the fact that "W. H." is not "H. W."—the possibility of the appellation of "Mr." being applied to one who had been an Earl since 1581, and who had twice been addressed in dedications by his full titles, and that by Shakespeare himself, is a wholly inadmissible hypothesis. To argue that this was merely "a blind," is simply to beg the question. If the Sonnets were addressed to Southampton, they must have been written between 1593 and 1598. In 1593 Southampton was in his twenty-first year, in 1598 in his twenty-sixth; Shakespeare, respectively, in his thirty-first and thirty-fifth year. Now, what is especially emphasized in the sonnets is the youthfulness of the young man to whom they are dedicated, and the advanced age of the poet. In Sonnet cviii. the youth is addressed as "a sweet boy," in cxxvi. as "a lovely boy," in liv. as "a beauteous and lovely youth"; in xcv. his "budding name" is referred

to, while the poet speaks of himself as "old," as "beaten and chopped with tanned antiquity," as being "with Time's injurious hand crushed and o'erworn." And so, as has been more than once pointed out, we have this anomaly—a man of thirty-four describing himself as a thing of "tanned antiquity" in writing to "a sweet and lovely boy" of twenty-five. No one could have been less like the effeminate youth of the Sonnets than Southampton. All we know about him, including his portraits, indicates that he was eminently masculine and manly. Again, it is matter of history that he greatly distinguished himself on the Azores expedition in 1597, acquitting himself with so much gallantry that, during the voyage, he was knighted by Essex. To this expedition, which must have involved one of those absences of which we hear so much in the Sonnets, to this exploit and this honour, which afforded so much opportunity for peculiarly acceptable compliment, Shakespeare makes no reference at all. There is nothing to indicate that the youth of the Sonnets had gained any military or political distinction, had taken any part in public life, or had ever been absent from England. To assume with Mr. Lee that the Sonnets were written in or before 1594, and therefore before Southampton had become distinguished, is to involve ourselves in inextricable difficulties. Even Mr. Lee admits that Sonnet cvii. must have reference to the death

of Elizabeth in 1603. With regard to the supposed references to Southampton's relations with Elizabeth Vernon, no certain, or, to speak more accurately, no even plausible inferences can be drawn in any particular: all that they can be reduced to are degrees of improbability.

If, again, we accept the theory of Tyrwhitt and Malone, supported by Mr. Butler, and suppose that W. H. was some obscure person, we are proceeding on mere hypothesis, and a hypothesis seriously shaken by the plain meaning expressed in Sonnets xxxvi., xxxvii., and cxxiv.

The enigma of these Sonnets is, we repeat, as insoluble now as it was when inquiry was first directed to them. Whether they are to be regarded as autobiographical, as dramatic studies, as a mixture of both, as a collection of miscellaneous poems, as written to order for others, as mere exercises in the sonnet-cycle, or as all of these things, is alike uncertain. Our knowledge of the time of their composition begins and ends with the facts, that some of them were, presumably, in circulation in or before 1598, that two of them had certainly been composed in or before 1599, and that all of them had been written by 1609. The rest is mere conjecture; and on mere conjecture and mere hypothesis is based every attempt to solve their mystery. If certainty about them can ever be arrived at, it can only be attained by evidence of which, as yet, we have not even an

inkling. The probability is, that it was Shakespeare's intention, or rather Thorpe's intention, to baffle curiosity, and, except in the judgment of fanatics, he has certainly succeeded in doing so.

For our own part we are very much inclined to suspect, that they owed their origin to the fashion of composing sonnet-cycles, that those cycles suggested their themes and gave them the ply; that the beautiful youth, the rival poet, and the dark lady are pure fictions of the imagination; and that these poems are autobiographical only in the sense in which *Venus and Adonis*, the *Rape of Lucrece*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello* are autobiographical.

LANDSCAPE IN POETRY

IT would be scarcely possible for a critic of Mr. Palgrave's taste and learning to produce a treatise on any aspect of poetry, which would not be full of interest and instruction, and the present volume is a contribution, and in some respects a memorable contribution, to a particularly attractive subject of critical inquiry. Its purpose is to trace the history of descriptive poetry in its relation, that is to say, to natural objects and more particularly to landscape, by illustrating its characteristics at different periods, and among different nations. Beginning with the Homeric poems, Mr. Palgrave reviews successively the "landscape" of the Greeks, the Romans, the Hebrews, the mediæval Italians, the Celts, the Anglo-Saxons, and of our own poets, from the predecessors of Chaucer to Lord Tennyson. That a work, covering an area so immense, should be far less satisfactory in some portions than in others is no more than what

[1] *Landscape in Poetry from Homer to Tennyson.* By Francis T. Palgrave.

might be expected, and Mr. Palgrave would probably be himself the first to admit that, except when he is dealing with the classical poetry of Hellas, of ancient and mediæval Italy, and of our own country, his treatise has no pretension to adequacy. Even within these bounds there is much which is irrelevant, and much which is surprisingly defective. Where, as in a subject like this, the material at the author's disposal is necessarily so superabundant, surely the utmost care should have been taken both to keep within the limits of the theme proposed, and to select the most pertinent and typical illustrations. But when Mr. Palgrave illustrates "Homeric landscape" by the simile describing the heifers frisking about the drove of cows in the fold-yard, and the "Sophoclean landscape" by the simile of the blast-impelled wave rolling up the shingle, he lays himself open to the imputation of drawing at random on his commonplace book. Indeed, the pleasure with which lovers of classical poetry will read this book cannot fail to be mingled with the liveliest surprise and disappointment. Take the Homeric poems. If a reader, tolerably well versed in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, were asked for illustrations of the power with which natural phenomena are described, to what would he turn? Certainly not to Mr. Palgrave's meagre and trivial examples, three of which alone have any title to pertinence. He would turn to the winter landscape

in *Iliad*, xii. 278–286, to the lifting of the cloud from the landscape in *Iliad*, xvi. 296 :—

> ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἀφ' ὑψηλῆς κορυφῆς ὄρεος μεγάλοιο
> κινήσῃ πυκινὴν νεφέλην στεροπηγερέτα Ζεύς,
> ἔκ τ' ἔφανεν πᾶσαι σκοπιαὶ καὶ πρώονες ἄκροι
> καὶ νάπαι, οὐρανόθεν δ' ἄρ' ὑπεῤῥάγη ἄσπετος αἰθήρ.

"As when Zeus, the gatherer of the lightning, moves a thick cloud from the high head of some mighty mountain, and all the cliffs and the jutting crags and the dells start into light, and the immeasurable heaven breaks open to its highest";

to the descent of the wind on the sea, *Ib.* xi. 305–308 :—

> ὡς ὁπότε Ζέφυρος νέφεα στυφελίξῃ
> ἀργεστᾶο Νότοιο, βαθείῃ λαίλαπι τύπτων·
> πολλὸν δὲ τρόφι κῦμα κυλίνδεται, ὑψόσε δ' ἄχνη
> σκίδναται ἐξ ἀνέμοιο πολυπλάγκτοιο ἰωῆς.

"As when the west wind buffets the cloudlets of the brightening south wind, lashing them with furious squall, and the big wave swells up and rolls along, and the spray is scattered on high by the blast of the careering gale";

or to the pictures of the billow-buffeted headland, and the wave bursting on the ship in *Iliad*, xv. 618–628; or to the storm-cloud coming over the sea in *Iliad*, iv. 277; or to the descent of the wind on the standing corn, *Iliad*, ii. 147. He would point, above all, to the description of Calypso's grotto, in *Odyssey*, v. 63–74; to that of the harbour of Phorcys, in *Odyssey*, xiii. 97–112; to the fountain in the grove, xvii. 205–211. Mr. Palgrave comments justly on Homer's minute observation of nature; but he

only gives one illustration, where it is noticed in *Odyssey*, vi. 94, that the sea, in beating on the coast, "washed the pebbles clean." He might have added with propriety many others: as the "earth blackening behind the plough," in *Iliad*, xviii. 548; the bats in the cave, *Odyssey*, xxiv. 5–8; the birds escaping from the vultures, *Iliad*, xxii. 304, 305; the wasps "wriggling as far as the middle," *σφῆκες μέσον αἰόλοι*, *Iliad*, xii. 167; the dogs and the lions, *Iliad*, xviii. 585, 586.

Mr. Palgrave observes that Homer "was not only familiar with the sea, but loved it with a love somewhat unusual in poets." We venture to submit that there is not a line in Homer indicating that he "loved" the sea, except for poetical purposes; like most of the Greeks he probably dreaded it; his real feeling towards it is no doubt indicated in his own words:—

> *οὐ γὰρ ἐγώ γέ τί φημι κακώτερον ἄλλο θαλάσσης*
> *ἄνδρα γε συγχεῦαι.*

—nothing crushes a man's spirit more than the sea. Mr. Palgrave justly points out that Hesiod's rude prosaic style and matter are not congenial to the poetic landscape, yet it is only fair to Hesiod to say, that his poetry is not without vivid touches of natural description, as the winter scene in *Works and Days*, 504 sqq., and his description of the beginning of spring, 565–569, show. Professor Palgrave next glances

at the treatment of nature in the lyric poets, and very properly cites the lovely fragment of Alcman:

> βάλε δὴ βάλε κηρύλος εἴην
> ὅς τ' ἐπὶ κύματος ἄνθος ἅμ' ἀλκυονέσσι ποτῆται,
> νηλεγὲς ἦτορ ἔχων, ἁλιπόρφυρος εἴαρος ὄρνις,—

but in translating it makes a truly extraordinary blunder.

> "Would I were the kingfisher, as he flies, with his mates *in his feeble age*, between wind and water."

νηλεγὲς ἦτορ meaning, as we need hardly say, "reckless heart"; it is exactly Byron's, "With all her *reckless* birds upon the wing." In the quotations from Sappho, Ibycus, and Pindar, Mr. Palgrave has been judicious and happy, but surely he ought to have found place for the lovely flower cradle of Iamus in the sixth Olympic Ode, and for the moonlight evening in the third Olympian,—only seven words, but what a picture!—while, in the popular poetry, the omission of the Swallow Song is inexplicable.[1] Nor can we forgive him the omission of the magnificent simile of the spring wind clearing away the clouds, in the thirteenth of the fragments attributed to Solon.

But it is in dealing with the Greek dramatists that Mr. Palgrave is most defective in illustration. It is not to the opening of the *Prometheus*, or to the conclusion, or, indeed, to any of the passages

[1] See Bergk, Poet. Lyr. *Carm.* Pop. xxix.

from this poet which Mr. Palgrave cites, that we must turn for Æschylean landscape, or for illustration of this poet's power of natural description. It is to his brief picture—his pictures of scenery, though singularly vivid, are always brief—of the airy seat "against which the watery clouds drift into snow,"

> λισσὰς αἰγίλιψ ἀπρόσδεικτος οἰόφρων κρεμὰς
> γυπιὰς πέτρα (*Supplices*, 772–3),

where almost every word is a perfect picture, literally beggaring mere translation; it is to his description, so magical in its rhythm, of the mid-day sea slumbering in summer calm (*Agamemnon*, 548–50),

> ἢ θάλπος, εὖτε πόντος ἐν μεσημβριναῖς
> κοίταις ἀκύμων νηνέμοις εὕδοι πεσών,

to his picture of the keen brisk wind, clearing the clouds away, to bring into relief against the sky the dark masses of waves tossing on the horizon (*Agamemnon*, 1152–54), to his world-famous

> ποντίων κυμάτων
> ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα.
> "The multitudinous laughter of the ocean waves."
> —*Prometheus*, 89–90.

Mr. Palgrave has, of course, cited with reference to Sophocles the great chorus in the *Œdipus Coloneus*, but he has omitted to notice that, if Sophocles has not elsewhere given us so elaborate a piece of natural description, innumerable

touches in the dramas, and more particularly in the fragments, show that he observed nature almost as minutely as Shakespeare. Nothing could be more vivid than the touches of description in the *Philoctetes*. From Euripides Mr. Palgrave cites nothing, observing that he rarely goes beyond somewhat conventional phrases. Surely Mr. Palgrave must have forgotten the magnificent description of Parnassus, as seen from the plain, in the *Phœnissæ*, the glorious description of a moonlight night, as represented on the tapestry, in the *Ion*, the vivid touches of natural description in the *Bacchæ*, that of the meadow in the *Hippolytus*, and the chorus about Athens in the *Medea*, to say nothing of the charming rural picture in the fragments of the *Phaeton*.[1] To say of Aristophanes that, in his treatment of nature, he rarely goes beyond somewhat common phrases, is to say what is refuted, not merely in the chorus referred to by Mr. Palgrave, but in the *Frogs* and in the *Birds*. He stands next to Homer in his keen sensibility to the charm of nature. Shelley himself might have written the choruses referred to. In dealing with the Alexandrian poets Mr. Palgrave passes over Apollonius Rhodius and Callimachus entirely, and yet the fine picture of Delos given by Callimachus in the Hymn to Delos is one of the gems of ancient description, and Apollonius Rhodius abounds with the most graphic and

[1] Nauck, *Trag. Græc. Frag.*, p. 473.

charming delineations of scenery and natural objects. What a beautiful description of early morning is this!—

> ἦμος δ' οὐρανόθεν χαροπὴ ὑπολάμπεται ἠὼς
> ἐκ περάτης ἀνιοῦσα, διαγλαύσσουσι δ' ἀταρποί,
> καὶ πεδία δροσόεντα φαεινῇ λάμπεται αἴγλῃ.
> *Argon.* i. 1280–1283.

"What time from heaven the bright glad morn coming up from the East begins to shine, and path and road are all agleam, and the dew-bespangled plains are flashing with the radiant light."

How vivid too, and with the vividness of modern poetry, are his descriptions of the cave of Hades and its neighbourhood (ii. 729–750), and the Great Syrtis (iv. 1230–1245)! In his selections from the Greek Anthology Mr. Palgrave is much happier; but here again he has many omissions, and among them the most remarkable illustration of Greek nature-painting to be found in that collection—namely, Meleager's idyll giving an elaborate description of a spring day, which might have been written by Thomson (*Pal. Anthology*, ix. 363). It may be observed in passing that οὐρεσίφοιτα κρίνα (*Pal. Anth.*, v. 144) can hardly mean "lilies that wander over the hills," but lilies "that haunt the hills," and that ξουθαὶ μελίσσαι in Theocritus, vii. 142, probably means "buzzing" bees, not "tawny."

In dealing with the Roman poets Mr. Palgrave is, with one exception, most unsatisfactory. From the poets preceding Lucretius, amply as

the fragments would serve his purpose, he gives only one illustration. We should have expected the vivid picture given by Accius in his *Œnomaus* of the early morning:

> "Forte ante Auroram, radiorum ardentum indicem,
> Cum e somno in segetem agrestis cornutos cient,
> Ut rorulentas terras ferro rufidas
> Proscindant, glebasque arvo ex molli exsuscitent."

"Perchance before the dawn that heralds the burning rays, what time rustics bring forth the oxen from their sleep into the cornfields, to break up the red dew-spangled soil with the ploughshare, and turn up the clods from the soft soil";

or the wonderfully graphic description of a sudden storm at sea, in the fragments of the *Dulorestes* of Pacuvius:

> "Profectione læti piscium lasciviam
> Intuentur, nec tuendi capere satietas potest.
> Interea prope jam occidente sole inhorrescit mare,
> Tenebræ conduplicantur, noctisque et nimbum occæcat nigror,
> Flamma inter nubes coruscat, cælum tonitru contremit,
> Grando mixta imbri largifico subita præcipitans cadit,
> Undique omnes venti erumpunt, sævi existunt turbines,
> Fervit æstu pelagus."

"Glad at heart when they set out they gaze at the sporting fish, and are never weary of looking at them. Meanwhile, hard upon sunset, the sea ruffles, darkness gathers thick, the blackness of the storm-clouded night hides everything, flame flashes between the clouds, heaven shakes with thunder, hail, mingled with streaming rain, dashes suddenly down, from every quarter all the winds tear forth, wild whirlwinds rise, the sea boils with the seething waters."

With Lucretius, indeed, he deals fully, and this

portion of his work leaves little to be desired. But a reference to the lines to Sirmio and one illustration from the *Peleus and Thetis* exhaust his examples from Catullus. We should have expected the picture of the stream leaping from the mossy rock into the valley beneath, in the Epistle to Manlius, of the morning chasing away the shadows in the *Attis*, and the lovely flower pictures in the Epithalamia. In dealing with Virgil most of Mr. Palgrave's citations are practically irrelevant; scarcely any of the passages which best illustrate Virgil's power of landscape painting being even referred to. "The *Æneid*," says Mr. Palgrave, "may be briefly dismissed. Natural description can have but little place in an epic." And yet what are the passages to which any one, who wishes to illustrate the charm and power of Virgil's pictures of scenery, would naturally turn? Surely to these: the description of the rocky recess which sheltered Æneas's ships (*Æneid*, i. 159–168), a picture worthy of Salvator; the picture of Ætna (iii. 570–582), which rivals the picture of it given by Pindar, a picture praised so justly by Mr. Palgrave himself; the description of a calm night (iv. 522–527); the wave-buffeted, gull-haunted rock (v. 124–128); and, above all, the scenery at the mouth of the Tiber, bathed in the rays of the morning sun, a picture unexcelled even by Tennyson. Nor even in the *Georgics* is any reference made to

the superb description of a storm in harvest time (i. 216–334), or to the magnificent winter piece (iii. 349–370).

The remarks about the indifference of Propertius to natural scenery are most unjust. What a charming picture is this!—

"Grata domus Nymphis humida Thyniasin,
Quam supra nullæ pendebant debita curæ
  Roscida desertis poma sub arboribus;
Et circum irriguo surgebant lilia prato
  Candida purpureis mixta papaveribus."
El., I. xx. 35–39.

It may be conceded that Ovid is conventional and commonplace in his treatment of nature; but why is Valerius Flaccus, with his bold, vivid touches, left unnoticed? Why does one citation suffice for the many exquisite cameos which ought to have been given from Statius? Another inexplicable omission in Mr. Palgrave's work is the poem entitled *Rosæ*, attributed to Ausonius—a lovely poem, infinitely more beautiful than the epigram quoted by Mr. Palgrave from the Latin Anthology, and rivalling the fragment given by him from Tiberianus. Most readers would agree with him in his estimate of Claudian, but he might have added the fine description of Olympus in the *De Consulatu Theodori*, 200–210:

"Ut altus Olympi
Vertex, qui spatio ventos hiemesque relinquit,
Perpetuum nullâ temeratus nube serenum
Celsior exsurgit pluviis, auditque ruentes
Sub pedibus nimbos, et rauca tonitrua calcat;'

which Goldsmith, by the way, has borrowed and paraphrased in the *Deserted Village*, together with its sublime application :

As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form
Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles round its head.

Space does not serve to follow Mr. Palgrave through his chapters on Italian, Celtic, and Anglo-Saxon poetry, in all of which his omissions are as remarkable as his citations ; so we must content ourselves with making a few remarks on his treatment of the English poets. It is pleasing to see that, guided by Gray, he has done justice to Lydgate, but he has not noticed the distinguishing peculiarity of this poet in his description, his extraordinary sensitive appreciation of colour.

Among the Scotch poets of the fifteenth century a prominent place should have been given to Henryson who is not even mentioned. Mr. Palgrave hurries over the Elizabethan poets with too much expedition, and the poets of the eighteenth century fare even worse. Great injustice is done to Thomson. Why did not Mr. Palgrave, instead of citing what he calls Thomson's "cold" tropical landscape, for the purpose of contrasting it unfavourably with Tennyson's picture in *Enoch Arden*, give us instead the Summer morning—

"At first faint gleaming in the dappled East
. . . Young day pours in apace,
And opens all the lawny prospect wide,
The dripping rock, the mountain's misty tops
Swell on the sight, and brighten with the dawn,
Blue through the dusk the smoking currents shine,"

or

"The clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer sky";

or the rainbow in the *Lines to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton*? Dyer may be somewhat prosaic, but he is not a poet to be despatched in a treatise on descriptive poetry, without citation, in a few contemptuous lines: how vivid is his picture of a calm in the tropics!—

"The dewy feather, on the cordage hung,
Moves not; the flat sea shines, like yellow gold
Fused in the fire";

or his

"Rocks in ever-wild
Posture of falling";

or the charming landscape in *Grongar Hill* with such touches as these:

"The windy summit wild and high
Roughly rushing on the sky";

or

"Rushing from the woods the spires
Seem from hence ascending fires."

As Wordsworth said, "Dyer's beauties are innumerable and of a high order." It is very surprising that nothing should have been said

about Shenstone and the Wartons, about Scott of Amwell, Jago, Crowe and Bowles, all of whom are, in various ways, remarkable as descriptive poets. And certainly Mr. Palgrave does scant justice to Cowper; his touch may be prosaic, but he always had his eye on the object, and his landscape lives. Surely, by the way, Mr. Palgrave is mistaken in supposing that Shelley apparently understood Alastor to mean a "wanderer"; he understood it, as the preface shows, to mean, what it means so often in Greek, "one under the spell of an avenging deity."

Here we must break off. Mr. Palgrave's is an important work, and it is the duty, therefore, of a critic to review it seriously, in the hope that, should it reach a second edition, which may be confidently anticipated, Mr. Palgrave may be disposed to do a little more justice to his most interesting subject.

Since this article was written Mr. Palgrave's lamented death has unhappily rendered all hope of what was anticipated in the last paragraph, vain. But the review has been reprinted, and with some additions, in the hope that it may not be unacceptable as a contribution, however slight and imperfect, to a subject of great interest to lovers of poetry.

AN APPRECIATION OF PROFESSOR PALGRAVE

A FAMILIAR figure in literary circles, a fine critic, a graceful and scholarly minor poet, and one whose name will long be held in affectionate remembrance by lovers of English poetry, has passed away in the person of Francis Turner Palgrave. It would be absurd to place him beside Matthew Arnold—to whose genius, to whose characteristic accomplishments, to whose authority and influence, he had no pretension. And yet it may be questioned whether, after Arnold, any other critic of our time contributed so much to educate public taste where, in this country, it most needs such education. If, as a nurse of poets and in poetic achievement, England stands second to no nation in Europe, in no nation in the world has the standard of popular taste been so low, has the insensibility to what is excellent, and the perverse preference of what is mediocre to what is of the first order, been so signally, so deplorably, conspicuous. The generation which produced Wordsworth preferred Moore, and no less a person than the author of *Vanity Fair* wrote:—"Old daddy Words-

worth may bless his stars if he ever gets high enough in Heaven to black Tommy Moore's boots." While the readers of Keats might have been numbered on his fingers, Robert Montgomery's *Satan* and *Omnipresence of the Deity* were going through their twelfth editions. During many years, for ten readers of Browning's poems there were a hundred thousand for Martin Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*, while the popularity of Mrs. Browning was as a wan shadow to the meridian splendour of Eliza Cook. Whoever will turn to the criticism of current reviews and magazines forty years ago will have no difficulty in understanding the diathesis described by Matthew Arnold as "on the side of beauty and taste, vulgarity; on the side of morality and feeling, coarseness; on the side of mind and spirit, unintelligence." Whoever will turn to nine out of the ten Anthologies, most in vogue before 1861, will understand, that the same instinct which in the Dark Ages led man to prefer Sedulius and Avitus to Catullus and Horace, Statius to Virgil, and Hroswitha to Terence, led these editors to analogous selections.

Making every allowance for the co-operation of other causes, it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the appearance of the *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* in 1861 initiated an era in popular taste. It remains now incomparably the best selection of its kind in

existence. Its distinctive feature is the characteristic which differentiates it from all the anthologies which preceded or have followed it. It was to include nothing which was not first-rate; there was to be no compromise with the second-rate; if its gems varied, as gems do in value, each was to be of the first water. With patient and scrupulous diligence, the whole body of English poetry, from Surrey to Wordsworth, was explored and sifted. After due rejections, each piece in the residue was considered, weighed, tested. And here Mr. Palgrave had assistance, more invaluable than any other anthologist in the world has had—that of the illustrious poet to whom the volume was dedicated. It may be safely said of Tennyson that nature and culture had qualified him for being as great a critic as he was a poet. His taste was probably infallible; his touchstones and standards were derived not merely from the masters who had taught him his own art, but from a wonderfully catholic and sympathetic communion with all that was best in every sphere of influential artistic activity. The consequence is, that a book like the *Golden Treasury*, especially when taken in conjunction with the notes, which form an admirable commentary on the text, may be said to lay something more than the foundation of a sound critical education. What the *Golden Treasury* is to readers of a maturer age the *Children's Treasury* is to younger readers. It is a great

pity that such inferior works as many which we could name are allowed, in our schools, to supplant such a work as Palgrave's. The same exquisite taste and nice discernment mark his other anthologies, his selections from Herrick, and Tennyson, and, though perhaps in a less degree, his *Treasury of English Sacred Poetry*, and his recently published supplement to the *Golden Treasury*. It is probably impossible to overestimate the salutary influence which these works have exercised.

There is no arguing on matters of taste, and exception might easily be taken, sometimes, to his dicta as a critic. But this at least must be conceded by everybody, that in the best and most comprehensive sense of the term he was a man of classical temper, taste, and culture, and that he had all the insight and discernment, all the instincts and sympathies, which are the result of such qualifications. He had no taint of vulgarity, of charlatanism, of insincerity. He never talked or wrote the cant of the cliques or of the multitude. He understood and clung to what was excellent; he had no toleration for what was common and second rate; he was not of the crowd. He belonged to the same type of men as Matthew Arnold and William Cory, a type peculiar to our old Universities before things took the turn which they are taking now. It will be long before we shall have such critics again, and their loss is incalculable.

As a scholar Palgrave was rather elegant than profound or exact, and, to judge from a series of lectures delivered by him as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, on *Landscape in Classical Poetry*, and afterwards published in a work which is here reviewed, his acquaintance with the Greek and Roman poets was, if scholarly and sympathetic, somewhat superficial. But he was getting old, and perhaps he had lost his memory or his notes. As a poet he was the author of four volumes, the earliest, published in 1864, entitled *Idylls and Songs*, and the latest, published in 1892, *Amenophis; and other Poems*. But his most ambitious effort appeared in 1882, *Visions of England*, written with the laudable purpose of stirring up in the young the spirit of patriotism. His poetry may be described, not inaptly, in the sentence in which Dr. Johnson sums up the characteristics of Addison's verses:—"Polished and pure, the production of a mind too judicious to commit faults, but not sufficiently vigorous to attain excellence." Perhaps they served their end in procuring for him the honourable appointment which he filled competently for ten years—that of the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford. It may be said of him as was said of Southey, he was a good man and not a bad poet, or of Agricola, *decentior quam sublimior fuit*. But as a critic of Belles Lettres he was excellent.

ANCIENT GREEK AND MODERN LIFE [1]

THAT a second edition of Professor Butcher's essays on *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius* should have been called for so soon is assuredly a very significant fact. And it is significant in more ways than one. It not only goes far to refute Lord Coleridge's theory that Greek has lost its hold on modern life, but it furnishes one of the many proofs, which we have recently had, that people are beginning to understand what is now to be expected from classical scholars, if classical scholars are to hold their own in the world of to-day, and that scholars are, in their turn, aware that they no longer constitute an esoteric guild for esoteric studies. The task of the purely philological labourer has been accomplished. During more than four centuries, succeeding schools of literal critics have been toiling to furnish mankind with the means of unlocking the treasures of classical Greece. Till within

[1] *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius.* By S. H. Butcher, Litt. D., LL.D. London.

comparatively recent times, the power of reading the Greek classics with accuracy and ease was an accomplishment beyond the reach of any but specialists. Unless a student was prepared to grapple with the difficulties of unsettled and often unintelligible texts, to make his own grammar—nay, his own dictionary—to choose between conflicting and contradictory interpretations, and, in a word, to possess all that now would be required in a classical editor, it would be impossible for him to read, with any comfort, a chorus of Æschylus or Sophocles, an ode of Pindar, or a speech in Thucydides. But now all these difficulties have vanished. Excellent lexicons, grammars, commentaries, and translations, with settled texts, and editions of the principal Greek classics so satisfactory that practically they leave nothing to be desired, have rendered what was once the monopoly of mere scholars common property. The power of reading Greek with accuracy and comfort is now, indeed, within the reach of any person of average intelligence and industry.

But prescription and tradition are tenacious of their privileges. Greek has so long been regarded as the inheritance of philologists, that they are not prepared to resign what was once their exclusive possession, without a struggle. It is useless to point out to them that, if Greek is to maintain its place in modern education, it can only maintain it by virtue of its connection

with the humanities, by virtue of its intrinsic value as the expression of genius and art, and of its historical value as the key to the development and characteristics of the classics of the modern world; by virtue, in fine, of its relation to life, and its relation to History and Criticism. The revival, indeed, of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* of the Middle Ages would not be an absurder anachronism than it is to draw no distinction between the functions and aims of classical scholarship, when it was, necessarily, confined to philologists and specialists, and its functions and aims at the present day. It has been the obstinate determination on the part of academic bodies not to recognise this distinction, but to preserve Greek as the monopoly of those who approach it only on the side of philological specialism, which has led to its complete dissociation in our scholastic system from what constitutes its chief, almost its sole title to preservation. At Cambridge, for example, it has been expressly excluded from the only School in which the study of Literature has been organized, and an attempt to substitute Modern Languages in its place—for a degree in arts—was only defeated by the intervention of non-resident members of the University. At Oxford a scheme for a "School of Literature," in which Greek was to have no place, might, not long ago have been carried, and the casting vote of the proctor alone saved the University from this

disgrace, and Greek from a crushing blow.[1] But, fortunately for the cause of Greek, there is every indication that a reaction, too strong for academic bodies to resist, is setting in. Scholars are beginning to see that what Socrates did for Philosophy must now be done for Greek, if Greek is to hold its own. Thus, it has preserved, and no doubt may preserve, its esoteric side; but that which constitutes its chief, its real importance—which justifies its retention in modern education—is not what appeals, and can only appeal, in each generation, to a small circle of "specialists"—its philological interest, but what appeals to liberal intelligence, to men as men, to the poet, to the philosopher, to the orator, to the critic. To this end, to what may be described as the vitalization of Greek, all the labours of the late Professor Jowett were directed; and by his means Plato, Thucydides, and Aristotle are brought into influential relation with modern life. What he effected for them Professor Jebb has effected for Sophocles, and not only has this unrivalled Greek scholar placed within the reach of any person of average intelligence all that is necessary for the elucidation of the language, art, and philosophy of the Shakespeare of the Athenian stage, but he has not disdained to furnish a popular manual of Homeric study, and a popular elementary guide-book to Greek litera-

[1] This blow has, since these words were written, been inflicted. See *supra* pp. 45–75.

ture. Professor Lewis Campbell has laboured in the same field and in the same cause. Great also have been the services rendered to the popularization of Greek by Mr. Andrew Lang, Mr. Ernest Myers, Mr. Walter Leaf, and many other distinguished scholars, all of whom have shown, both by their published works and as lecturers, that the masterpieces of ancient Greece may become as intelligible and influential in the world of to-day as they were more than two thousand years ago.

We welcome with joy the advent of Professor Butcher among these prophets. Few names stand higher than his in the roll of modern scholars, and assuredly few modern scholars possess, in so large a measure, the power of applying scholarship to the purposes of liberal criticism and exegesis. He has written a delightful book, in a pleasant style, full of learning, suggestive, stimulating, a book which no student of Greek literature can lay down without a hearty feeling of gratitude to the author. Porson said of Bentley that more might be learned from his work when he was in error than from the work of a rival scholar when he was in the right. We shall not presume to accuse Professor Butcher of error, but we are bound to say that there is much in his book which appears to us very questionable, and much also from which we entirely dissent.

Professor Butcher discusses, for example, at

great length, the leading characteristics of the Greek temper, but, in drawing his conclusions, he has not sufficiently distinguished between what was more or less accidental and what was essentially peculiar. The fact is that nothing is so easy as generalisations of this kind, if the deduction of half truth be our aim; and nothing so difficult if whole truth, or truth which may be accepted without reserve, is to be the result. The most mobile, plastic, Protean people who have ever lived, their activity, within the strict limits of classical literature, extended over about six centuries, and, if we protract it to the point included in Professor Butcher's illustrations, to more than nine centuries. Of their literature, though we appear to have the best of it, not a third part has survived. By an adroit use of illustration, it is, therefore, easy to predicate anything of them. Go to serious epic, to serious as distinguished from passionate lyric, to tragedy, to threnody, and they were, if you please, the gravest people on earth's face; go to Aristophanes and to the poets of the Old Comedy, and they were the merriest; go to the Ionic Elegists and to the fragments of the New Comedy, and they were the saddest and most cynical; go to Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle, and they were, like Dante's sages, *ni tristi ni lieti*. We do not quarrel with Professor Butcher's general position in his Essay on the melancholy of the Greeks, or question that

there existed in certain moods a profound melancholy and dissatisfaction with life in the Greek temper. But of what intelligent and reflective people or individual who have ever existed is this not equally true? Where we do quarrel with Professor Butcher is on the following point, the point on which he chiefly rests in proving that the Greeks were pre-eminently distinguished by pessimistic melancholy—an assertion that we deny *in toto*. He tells us that, with one notable exception, to which he subsequently adds three others, the Greeks regarded hope not as a solace and support in life, but as a snare and a delusion, not as a power to cling to, but as an influence fraught with mischief. Nothing surely can be more erroneous. The wisest people who have ever lived are not likely to have confounded baseless and flighty desires or aspirations with what is implied in hope, though Professor Butcher has done so in the illustrations advanced by him in support of his theory. All through Greek literature, from Hesiod to Theocritus—not to go further—the importance and wisdom of cherishing hope, as one of the chief supports of life, are emphatically dwelt on. Professor Butcher has surely misrepresented—certainly Æschylus and the Greeks generally did not interpret it in the sense in which he has done—the fable of Pandora's chest. It was not "as part of the deadly gift of the goddess" that hope was there; it was as the one

blessing amid the crowd of ills. "As long as a man lives," says Theognis, "let him wait on hope. . . . Let him pray to the gods; and to Hope let him sacrifice first and last" (1143–1146). Pindar, if he warns man against baseless, wild, or extravagant expectation, is emphatic on the wisdom of cherishing hope. It is "the sweet nurse of the heart in old age," "the chief helmsman of man's versatile will." (*Fragment*, 233.) "A man should cherish good hope." (*Isth.*, vii. 15.) "It is the wing on which soaring manhood is supported." (Pythian, viii. 93.) "The wise," says Euripides, "must cherish hope." (*Frag. of Ino.*) Again: "Prudent hope must be your stay in misfortune." (*Id.*) Life, he says in the *Troades* (628), is preferable to death, in that it has hopes. A sentiment repeated by Euripides again in the *Hercules Furens* (105–6): "That man is the bravest who trusts to hope under all circumstances; to be without hope is the part of a coward." So Menander: "Hold before yourself the shield of good hope." (*Incert. Frag.* xlvii.) The passages quoted by Professor Butcher from Thucydides are not to the point. It would have been much more to the point had he quoted the passage in which Pericles eulogizes those who "committed to hope the uncertainty of success" (II. 42), or the passage (I. 70) in which the superiority of the Athenians to the Lacedæmonians in civil and military efficiency

is largely attributed to their reliance on hope. Again, what, according to Cephalus, in the *Republic*, is the chief solace of old age?—"The abiding presence of sweet hope." But it would be easy to multiply indefinitely from the Greek classics what Professor Butcher calls "rare examples of hope in the happier aspect."

The most important chapters in Professor Butcher's work—indeed they occupy nearly one half of it—are those dealing with Aristotle's theory of fine art and poetry. On no subject in criticism have there been so many misconceptions current and influential even among scholars, originating for the most part from mistranslations and misunderstandings of the treatise in which they find their chief embodiment—the *Poetics*. This has unfortunately come down to us in a very imperfect and corrupt state, and, what is more unfortunate still, it became a classic in criticism long before it was properly understood. Thus, in the clause in the famous definition of tragedy, where Aristotle describes it as *δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν*, "through pity and fear effecting the purgation of these emotions," the French and English critics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ignoring the words *τῶν τοιούτων*, have totally misinterpreted the passage, and given it a meaning which was not only not intended by Aristotle, but which has falsified his whole theory of the scope and functions of tragedy.

An unsound text, the insertion of ἀλλά before the clause, sent Lessing on a wrong track. From the misinterpretation of another passage in the treatise (V. 4) has been deduced the famous doctrine of the Unities. The mistranslation of *σπουδαίος* in the definition of Tragedy, and of the same word in the comparison between Poetry and History, has led to misconceptions on other points. The scholars who did most in England to place the study of this treatise on a sound footing were Twining and Tyrwhitt. In the present century it has received exhaustive illustration from Saint-Hilaire, Stahr, Susemihl, Vahlen, Teichmüller, Ueberweg, Reinkens, Jacob Bernays, and others; while such works as E. Müller's *Geschichte der Theorie der Kunst bei den Alten* have thrown general light on the question of Greek æsthetics. That Professor Butcher has not been able to advance anything new in these essays is very creditable to him, for the simple reason that, as all that is worth saying has been said, his sole resource, had he attempted to be original, would have been paradox and sophistry. With regard to the question of the *Katharsis*, it will probably be, for all time, a case of "quot homines tot sententiæ"; and we have certainly no intention of accompanying Professor Butcher into this labyrinth. We entirely agree with him and Bernays that the passage in the *Politics* (V. viii. 7) settles conclusively at least one part of the meaning, but we differ from Bernays,

in contending that the "lustratio" is included, and from Professor Butcher, in contending that the "lustratio" is not effected merely by the relief. Professor Butcher seems here indeed to be a little confused, or at all events confusing. He first explains "katharsis" as "a purging away of the emotions of pity and fear," and then explains it as "a purifying of them"; but it is neither easy to understand how "purging away" is "purifying," nor why we should "purify" what we "purge away." Surely it is better—but we speak with all submission—to take the word in two different meanings, the one signifying the immediate effect of tragedy in its direct appeal to the passions referred to, the other not to its immediate, but to its ulterior and total effect in educating the passions thus excited.

Professor Butcher, who appears to belong to the Pater School, dwells with great complacency on the fact that Aristotle "attempted to separate the function of æsthetics from that of morals," that "he made the end of art reside in a pleasurable emotion," that he says "nothing of any moral aim in poetry," and that though he often takes exception to Euripides as an artist, "he attaches no blame to him for the immoral tendency in some of his dramas," so severely censured by Aristophanes. If Professor Butcher implies, as he seems to imply by this, that Aristotle would lend any countenance to the

modern art-for-art's-sake doctrine, and proceeded on the assumption that there was no necessary connection between æsthetics and morals, he does Aristotle very great injustice, and is refuted by the *Poetics* themselves. In the fifth chapter Aristotle lays stress on the fact that tragedy is, like epic, a representation of "superior or morally good characters" (*μίμησις σπουδαίων*)—that the characters are to be good (*χρηστά*). In the twenty-fifth chapter he says that nothing can excuse the exhibition of moral depravity (*μοχθηρία*), unless it be one of the things implicit in the plot; and that among the most serious objections which can be brought against a drama is that it is likely to do moral harm (*βλαβερά*). In the thirteenth chapter he shows,—and on moral grounds,—why the protagonist in a tragedy should not be a perfectly good man or a perfectly bad man. Indeed, the very definition of tragedy refutes Professor Butcher's statement. It may be said, no doubt, that Aristotle maintains that the end of poetry is pleasure, but it must be "the proper pleasure," and in the proper pleasure moral satisfaction is implied.[1] It is only by a quibble that Professor Butcher's theory can be supported, and it is a pity to quibble on subjects which

[1] So he says, *Poet.*, xxvi., of epic and tragedy, that each ought not to produce any chance pleasure, but the pleasure proper to it (*δεῖ γὰρ οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν ἡδονὴν ποῖειν αὐτὰς ἀλλὰ τὴν εἰρημένην, i.e. οἰκεῖαν*).

may be so mischievously misunderstood. Aristotle was, we suspect, very much nearer to Ben Jonson and Milton than to Mr. Pater in his conception of the functions and scope of poetry.

In the interesting essay on Sophocles there are two statements which appear to us very questionable. It is surely not true to say that Sophocles was "the first of the Greeks who has clearly realized that suffering is not always penal." Who could have expressed this truth more forcibly than Æschylus? To say nothing of the well-known passage in the *Agamemnon*, 167–171:—

> *Ζῆνα . . .*
> *τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὁδώσαντα, τὸν πάθει μάθος*
> *θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν.*
> *στάζει δ' ἔν θ' ὕπνῳ πρὸ καρδιας*
> *μνησιπήμων πόνος, καὶ παρ' ἄκοντας ἦλθε σωφρονεῖν,—*

the doctrine of which is repeated in 241–2 of the same play, and in other passages in his dramas, notably in *Choephoroe*, 950–955, and in *Eumenides*, 495, *συμφέρει σωφρονεῖν ὑπὸ στένει.* The fact that suffering and calamity have resulted in blessing is emphasized as strongly in the concluding drama of the Orestean Trilogy, the *Eumenides*, as it is in the *Œdipus Coloneus.* Again, when Professor Butcher says that "in Sophocles the divine righteousness asserts itself not in the award of happiness or misery to the individual, but in the providential wisdom which assigns to each individual his place and function

in a universal moral order," he says what it is very difficult to understand. Surely in the case of each one of the protagonists in Sophocles, to employ the word in its non-technical sense, their deserts are very exactly meted out. Antigone deliberately courts her fate by setting the law at defiance, though she knew what the penalty was, and falls, but has her compensation in the applause of her own conscience and "in the faith that looks through death." Ajax paid the penalty, as the poet emphasizes, for brutality and impious insolence; Œdipus suffers for his impetuosity and intemperance, but, his punishment exceeding the offence, the balance is adjusted for him in final triumph over the sons who had wronged him, in procuring blessings for his protector, in the peace of the soul, and in a glorious death. Clytemnestra and Ægisthus well deserve their fate, as, in addition to committing their crime, they continue ostentatiously to glory in it. In the *Trachiniæ* Hercules is punished for a base and cowardly murder, followed by an act of cruel and indiscriminate vengeance, retribution coming on him through the sister of the man thus murdered, and the daughter of the prince on whom this iniquitous vengeance had been wreaked, as Deianeira, but for Iole, would not have sent the poisoned tunic. Sophocles has even altered the legend to emphasize the guilt of Hercules. The *Philoctetes*, indeed, is the only

play which lends any support to Professor Butcher's statement. Here the gods undoubtedly condemn a man to a life of torture that their designs, irrespective of the individual, may be fulfilled, and that Troy may not fall before the appointed time; but how fully, how nobly is he compensated! It seems to us that the award of happiness and misery to the individual, in accordance with desert, is as conspicuous in the ethics of Sophocles as it is in the ethics of Shakespeare. And it is the more conspicuous, when we remember the hampering conditions under which Sophocles had to work, the limitations conventionally imposed on the treatment of the legends.

We wish we had space to comment on Professor Butcher's admirable, though somewhat defective, chapter on the dawn of Romanticism in Greek poetry, but we must forbear, and repeat our thanks to him for a book full of interest and instruction, not the least of its charms being the lively and graceful style in which it is written.

THE PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM[1]

BISHOP WARBURTON said that there were two things which every man thought himself competent to do, to manage a small farm and to drive a whisky. Had Warburton lived in our time, he would probably have added a third—to set up for a critic. What the author of the best critical treatise in the Greek language pronounced to be the final fruit of long experience, culture, and study, directed and illumined by certain natural qualifications, has now come to be represented by the idle and irresponsible gossip of any one who can gossip agreeably. Agreeable gossip and good criticism are, as Sainte-Beuve and others have shown, far from being incompatible, the misfortune is that they should be confounded; but confounded they are, and the confusion is the curse of current literature. We have recently observed, with concern, that the rubbish which used

[1] *The Principles of Criticism. An Introduction to the Study of Literature.* By W. Basil Worsfold. London: Allen.

formerly to be shot into novels and poems is now being shot into criticism, and that there appears to be a growing impression that the accomplishments which qualify young men for spinning cobwebs in fiction and manufacturing versicles can, with a little management, serve to set them up as critics. There is not much more difficulty in forming an opinion about a book than there is in reading it, and as criticism in the hands of these fribbles becomes little more than the dithyrambic expression of that opinion, the profession of criticism is one in which it is delightfully easy to graduate. It requires neither learning nor knowledge, neither culture nor discipline. It is neither science nor art; it is the gift of nature, a sort of "lyric inspiration." With principles, with touchstones, with standards, it has nothing whatever to do. Its business is to declaim, to coin phrases, to juggle with fancies and to say "good things."

A writer, therefore, who tries to recall criticism to a sense of its responsibilities and true functions deserves all sympathy and encouragement. It is refreshing to turn from the sort of thing to which we have referred to such a work as Mr. Worsfold has given us. His design is "to present an account of the main principles of literary criticism," which he professes to trace from Plato to Matthew Arnold. Mr. Worsfold's thesis simply stated is that criticism—and he deals with criticism chiefly in its application to

poetry—has passed successively through five stages. With the Greeks it concerned itself principally with form. "The first question it asked with them was not, as with us, What is the thought? but What is the form?" By Addison—for here Mr. Worsfold makes a prodigious leap over some twenty centuries—it was furnished with a new test, and it asked, How does a given poem affect the imagination? By Lessing a return was made to the formal criticism of the ancients, but he adopted also Addison's criterion, and added definiteness to it. Victor Cousin followed in 1818 with his lectures, entitled, *Du Vrai, du Beau, et du Bien*, and enlarged the boundaries of the science by a complete theory of beauty and art, developed mainly out of Plato. Lastly came Matthew Arnold, who extended the realm still further, by the addition of certain other important touchstones of poetic excellence. At the present time a gradual limitation of the scope of its rules, and a gradual extension of the scope of its principles, are the tendencies most discernible in criticism. "An enlightened criticism no longer aims at directing the artist by formulating rules which, if they were valid, would only tend to obliterate the distinction between the fine and the technical arts. It allows him to work by whatever methods he may choose, and it is content to estimate his merit not by reference to his method but by reference to his

achievement, as measured by principles of universal validity."

All this is exceedingly ingenious, and has in it a measure of truth, but, like most generalisations on vast and complicated subjects, it is more plausible than sound. The stages in the progress of criticism are not so sharply defined as Mr. Worsfold would have us believe. If Greek criticism were represented only by Plato and the extant works of Aristotle, English by Addison and Matthew Arnold, German by Lessing, and French by Victor Cousin, what Mr. Worsfold postulates might, after a manner, pass muster. But by far the greater portion of Greek criticism has perished; it exists only in fragments, and to the most important and remarkable work on this subject which has come down to us from antiquity, the *Treatise on the Sublime*, Mr. Worsfold does not even refer. If he had done so, and had he considered what is scattered fragmentarily through the Greek writers, or may be gathered from the titles of treatises which are lost, he would have seen that much which he supposes to mark development in criticism has long been old. Innumerable passages in the minor Greek critics, in Plutarch and in the Scholia, especially if we add what is to be found in Roman writers, derived no doubt from Greek sources, amply warrant doubt whether, after all, it is not with criticism as it is, to use Goethe's expression, with wit, " Alles Gescheidte ist schon

gedacht worden, man muss nur versuchen, es noch einmal zu denken." At all events, it is a great mistake to suppose that Greek criticism, in its application to poetry, is represented by Plato and Aristotle. It would be almost as absurd to go to Plato for typical Greek criticism on poetry as it would be to go to Henry More or the Puritan Divines for typical English criticism. He approached it only as such a philosopher would be likely to approach it. He regarded art and letters generally simply as means of educational discipline and culture, or as mere playthings, of which the best to be expected was harmless pleasure. He despised poetry not only as an appeal, and a perturbing appeal, to the senses and the passions, but as representing the shadows of shadows. It may be pronounced with confidence that, had he seriously applied himself to literary and artistic criticism, he would have been one of the subtlest and profoundest critics who ever lived, and would probably have anticipated, so far as principles are concerned, all that Mr. Worsfold attributes to Addison, to Lessing, and to Victor Cousin; but, like our own Ruskin, he was wilful and fanatical.

Still less is Greek criticism represented by Aristotle. It is in the highest degree misleading to generalize from such a work as the *Poetics*. It is not merely a fragment, but a fragment deformed by desperate corruption,

hopeless interstices and contemptible interpolations. If it confines itself, or in the main confines itself, to formal criticism, it is simply because it was designed to deal with that particular department of criticism, not because its author supposed that the chief question which concerned criticism was form. Again, if by form Mr. Worsfold understands, as he appears to do, expression and structure, he very much misrepresents the Treatise. Aristotle's criterion of poetry is not its formal expression, for he distinctly declares that it is not metre which makes a poem, and even seems to maintain that a poem may be composed without metre. In Aristotle's definition and conception of poetry as the concrete expression of the universal, in his definition of the scope and functions of tragedy, and in innumerable occasional remarks we have the germs of much, and of very much, which Mr. Worsfold would attribute to the later developments of criticism.

Aristotle, it is true, derived his canons from an analysis of the masterpieces of Greek poetry, but it is doing him great injustice to say, that he would make all epics Homeric, and all plays Sophoclean, and most erroneous to assume that modern criticism commenced at this point. Aristotle distinctly questions whether tragedy had as yet perfected its proper types or not (*Poet.*, IV. 11), and in discussing the proper length of tragedy he makes a remark which shows that such a plot

as the plot of *Hamlet* or the plot of *Lear* would have been quite compatible with his canons.[1] The truth is that Mr. Worsfold has gone too far; he has confounded the various aspects of criticism with stages in its development. Aristotle dealt mainly with form, because it was his business to deal with form. Plato approached poetry from a particular point of view, because it was from that particular point of view that it concerned him.

Had Mr. Worsfold taken his stand in his review of ancient criticism on the treatise attributed to Longinus, he would have seen that what he so strangely attributes to Addison and later writers had long been anticipated. This remarkable work which, since its translation into French by Boileau in 1674, has had more influence on criticism both in England and on the Continent than any other work that could be named, would alone show how much we owe to the Greeks. It has analyzed and defined, for all time, the essential virtues and the essential vices of diction and style, and has traced them to their sources. It has furnished us with infallible criteria in judging rhetoric and poetry. Take its analysis of the "grand style," which is described comprehensively

[1] *ὁ δὲ κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν φύσιν τοῦ πράγματος ὅρος, ἄει μὲν ὁ μείζων μέχρι τοῦ σύνδηλος εἶναι καλλίων ἐστὶ κατὰ τὸ μέγεθος. ὡς δὲ ἁπλῶς διορίσαντας εἰπεῖν, ἐν ὅσῳ μεγέθει κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἐφεξῆς γιγνομένων συμβαίνει εἰς εὐτυχίαν ἐκ δυστυχίας, ἢ ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν μεταβάλλειν, ἱκανὸς ὅρος ἐστὶν τοῦ μεγέθους.* (*Poet.*, vii. 7.)

as *μεγαλοφροσύνης ἀπήχημα*, "the echo of a great soul"; it has, the Treatise tells us, five characteristics—richness and grandeur of conception (*τὸ περι τὰς νοήσεις ἁδρεπήβολον*); vehement and inspired passion (*τὸ σφοδρὸν καὶ ἐνθουσιαστικὸν πάθος*), the due formation of figures, which are twofold—first those of thought, and secondly those of expression (*ἡ ποὶα τῶν σχημάτων πλάσις δισσὰ δὲ ποῦ ταῦτα, τὰ μὲν νοήσεως, θατέρα δὲ λέξεως*); noble diction (*ἡ γενναία, φράσις*); dignified and elevated composition (*ἡ ἐν ἀξιώματι καὶ διάρσει σύνθεσις*). Nothing could be more masterly than its detailed analysis of each of these qualities, and of the pseudo forms which they assume, as the result of stimulated enthusiasm. How admirable, too, is its test of the sublime in the seventh chapter; its criticism of Sappho, generalizing what constitutes the charm and power of lyric, in the tenth chapter; its analysis of the eloquence of Demosthenes, again generalizing the characteristics of oratory in perfection (chap. xvii.); its demonstration of the inferiority of correct mediocrity to the faulty irregularities of inspired genius; its admirable remarks about the relation of Art to Nature. Like the *Poetics*, it has come down to us in a very mutilated form, and has evidently been interpolated by some inferior hand, which no doubt accounts for the exasperating triviality of some of the sections. Here, as elsewhere, we have references to the many losses which Greek

criticism has sustained, the author referring to treatises written by him on Xenophon, on Composition, and on the Passions.

It is impossible to give an adequate account of the evolution of criticism without a very careful survey of the chief contributors to criticism in each generation, and such a survey Mr. Worsfold has not attempted. To Latin criticism he never even refers. And yet it has had great influence on critical literature. The Romans, it is true, contributed scarcely anything new to criticism, except that which pertains to oratory. We know enough of Varro, with whom Roman criticism may be said to begin, to feel confident that he could have had no pretension to the finer qualities of the critic. Of the five treatises composed by him, only one, the *περὶ χαρακτήρων*, appears to have been purely critical, and it almost certainly drew largely on Greek sources. Horace derived the material of the *Ars Poetica* from a Greek writer, Neoptolemus of Parium. Much of Quinctilian's criticism is demonstrably a compilation from Greek writers. The best critic of poetry among the Romans is undoubtedly to be found in Petronius, occasional and scanty though his remarks are. But of prose literature Rome produced two really great critics —the one was Cicero, the other was Tacitus. The *Brutus* and the *Dialogus de Oratoribus* are masterpieces, equal to anything which has come down to us from the Greeks. One of the most

important critical principles ever enunciated we owe to Cicero. He was the first to demonstrate that the test of excellence in oratory lay, in its appealing equally to the multitude and to the most fastidious of connoisseurs. The most consummate rhetorician which the world has ever seen, he was at the same time a consummate critic of his art. This department of criticism has, indeed, for nearly two thousand years, been practically his monopoly; it may be questioned whether anything can be added, so far as the technique of rhetoric is concerned, to what may be traced to his writings. The interest of the *Dialogus de Oratoribus* is largely historical, but never have the causes which inspire and nourish, or depress and starve, eloquence been more eloquently and brilliantly explained. Nor must it be forgotten that it was through the medium of the Latin critics that Greek criticism became influential on modern literature.

Mr. Worsfold has very properly drawn attention to the fine passage about poetry in the second book of Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, but he says not a word about Sidney's remarkable treatise, one of the most charming contributions to the criticism of poetry which has ever been made, or about the admirable remarks in Ben Jonson's *Discoveries*. The interest of Elizabethan criticism, as represented by these works—and they are the only works on this subject of any value produced during the Elizabethan period—

lies partly in its return to Aristotelian canons, and partly in the importance which, in accordance with the ancients, it attaches to the didactic element in poetry. This is expressed very eloquently in Ben Jonson's dedication of the *Fox*:—

"If men will impartially and not asquint look toward the offices and function of a poet, they will easily conclude to themselves the impossibility of a man's being the good poet without being first the good man,—he that is able to inform young men to all good discipline, inflame young men to all good virtues, keep old men in their best and supreme state, or, as they decline to childhood, recover them to their first state, that comes forth the interpreter and arbiter of nature, a teacher of things divine no less than human."

This was precisely Spenser's conception of one of the chief functions of poetry. Thus the Elizabethan critics, who were followed afterwards by Milton, if they did not formally discuss the relation of æsthetic to ethic, insisted on their essential connection in the higher forms of poetry. Even in the succeeding age, when poetry lost all its high seriousness and much of its moral dignity, criticism, if it did not always insist on the application of this test, still retained it. Dryden could write, "I am satisfied if verse cause delight, for delight is the chief, if not the only end, of poesy"; but in adding "instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for poesy only instructs as it delights," he half corrected his former statement, and, indeed, simply reverted to what Aristophanes, Ben Jonson, and Milton would have been the first to admit.

But to return to Mr. Worsfold. A very serious defect in his work is his omission of all notice of Boileau and Dryden, and of the critics contemporary with them in France and England. The consequence is, that much is attributed to Addison which belongs to them, and Addison's importance as a critic is much overrated. Again, of the many memorable contributions to this branch of literature in England, in France, in Italy, and in Germany, which were made between the appearance of the Abbé Dubos's *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture* in 1719, and the lectures of Coleridge and Schlegel about 1812, all that is said is represented by what is said of Lessing. Though a long chapter is given to Matthew Arnold, Matthew Arnold's master, Sainte-Beuve, is, if we remember rightly, not so much as named.

Dr. Johnson divided critics into three classes—those who know the rules and judge by them, those who know no rules but judge entirely by natural taste, those who know the rules but are above them. This has been true in all ages, and sufficiently disposes of Mr. Worsfold's hypothesis about the stages through which criticism has passed. All that can be said is, that at certain times there has been a tendency, determined of course by the character of the particular age, towards the predominance of a particular critical method and of particular points of view. Further than this it would be perilous to go. It has

been the task of the present age to develop each of these methods to the full, and the most authoritative critics of the last twenty years might easily be ranged under one of those classes.

The soundest and most valuable part of Mr. Worsfold's book is the part dealing with the criticism of the last few years. His chapter on Matthew Arnold, in particular, is admirable, and his remarks on the functions of criticism at the present time, deduced as they have been from Wordsworth, Arnold and Ruskin, are in a high degree instructive and interesting. In pointing out that criticism should not confine itself merely to the investigation of technical excellence, and to all that is implied in the doctrine of Art for Art's sake, but should recognise that there are limits beyond which the artist should not exercise his technical skill, he recalls us to principles which it is well that criticism should not forget. We quite agree with him that there is now an increasing tendency to recognise these limits, and to lay most stress on the interpretation of the ideal element in literature and art. That is certainly the modern note. We have expressed our reasons for dissenting from Mr. Worsfold's historical view of the evolution of criticism, but his book is full of interest, and will amply repay the attention of serious readers. It is a book which does not deserve to be lost in the crowd.

WOMEN IN GREEK POETRY[1]

THE editor of this book cannot be congratulated either on his competence or on his discretion. To hurry into the world a work which is not merely a fragment, but which cries for revision, suppression, and correction in almost every page, is a literary crime of the first magnitude, and deserves the severest castigation. Of the author of the work, who appears to have been a young man of some attainments and of much promise, we desire to speak with all gentleness; we wholly absolve him from blame, for we have no right to assume that he would himself have given to the world what his editor admits was *intra penetralia Vestæ*, and what we hope and believe he would himself have committed *emendaturis ignibus*, had he arrived at years of discretion. But the dissemination of error is no light thing, especially in relation to subjects which are of great interest, and, from an historical and literary point of view, of great

[1] *Antimachus of Colophon and the Position of Women in Greek Poetry.* By E. F. M. Benecke.

importance. When we think of the many amiable and industrious tutors at Oxford and Cambridge who, unless they are put on their guard, will unsuspiciously fill their note-books with the nonsense of this volume, and impart it, by degrees, to the listening credulity of youth, we feel we have no alternative but to perform a plain, if painful, duty. We repeat, we absolve the author from all blame; the sole culprit is the editor.

That Solomon was the author of the *Iliad*, Poggio the author of the *Annals* of Tacitus, and Bacon the author of Shakespeare's plays, are hypotheses scarcely less monstrously absurd than the thesis propounded in this volume. Mr. Benecke's main contentions are "that a pure love between man and woman seemed to the early Greeks" (that is, to those who lived before the latter end of the Peloponnesian War) a sheer impossibility; that "in extant Greek poetry there is no trace of romantic love poetry addressed to women prior to the time of Asclepiades and Philetas"; that "in the works of these writers this element suddenly appears not in the nature of an experiment but as a leading motive"; that the appearance of this element was due to the influence of Antimachus, "who was the first man who had the courage to say that a woman was worth loving, and who may thus be regarded as the originator of the romantic element in litera-

ture." As we have not space to refute this nonsense in detail, we will give some examples of the way in which it is supported. First come misrepresentations and blunders. To emphasize the degradation of women, passages in translation are twisted and perverted almost beyond recognition.

Thus the couplet of Catullus—

> "Tunc te dilexi, non tantum ut vulgus amicam,
> Sed pater ut natos diligit et generos"—

is actually paraphrased "I loved you, not as a man loves a woman, but as a man loves a youth." The couplet in which Antigone says, "If my husband died, I could get another, and were I deprived of him too, I could be a mother by another man"—

> πόσις μὲν ἄν μοι, κατθανόντος, ἄλλος ἦν
> καὶ παῖς ἀπ' ἄλλου φωτός, εἰ τοῦδ' ἤμπλακον—

is translated "If my husband had died, I could have married another, if he had failed to get me children, I could have committed adultery." The "main motive of the Iliad," we are informed, (p. 76), "is the love of Achilles for Patroclus." The interest of the *Ajax* "is meant to centre on Teucer, the *amasius* of the dead Ajax." That the *Alcestis* may not be pressed into the service of those who would maintain that the Greeks knew how to respect women, the key to it is to be found "in the relation existing between Admetus and Apollo" (!) The revolting coarseness

and flippant vulgarity which mark the book, and, which do very little credit to Oxford training, are illustrated by the remarks employed to disparage these types of womanhood which the writer well knows would refute his theory. Thus of Nausicaa, "she is always regarded as a charming type of woman; but, after all, how one naturally thinks of her is (*sic*) as a charming type of washerwoman"; of Penelope, "she longs for the return of her husband, no doubt; but what really grieves her about the suitors is not their suggestions as to his death, but the quantity of pork they eat." On a par with this sort of thing is the remark about a play of Sophocles, which, by the way, is not extant, that "it merely drew the usual picture of the gods playing shove-halfpenny with human souls" (p. 47); or flippant vulgarity like the following — Admetus expresses "his deep regret that he cannot accompany Alcestis, as Charon does not issue return tickets." If this is the humour of young Oxford, the progress of which we hear so much has been purchased at a heavy price.

But to continue. On page 27 we are confronted with the astounding statement that "it is in Anacreon that we find for the first time love-poetry addressed to a woman." Why, Hermesianax (15, 16) distinctly states that Musæus wrote love-poetry to his wife or mistress, Antiope, and that Hesiod wrote many poems in honour of his love, Eoia (*Id.* 22–24).

Alcæus notoriously wrote love-poems to Sappho, as we need go no further than the first book of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* to know; both Alcman, the lover of Egido and Megalostrate, and, probably Ibycus also wrote love-poetry to women. It is mere special pleading to contend that Mimnermus did not write poetry to the mistress of his affections, to whom, according to Strabo, his erotic poetry was addressed. Hermesianax distinctly states that Mimnermus was passionately in love with Nanno, and certainly implies that his love-poetry was addressed to her (35–38). It is true that two of the fragments of Archilochus are ambiguous, but one is not; and, if we may judge by a single line (Fr. 71), his love for Neobule expressed itself in a manner indistinguishable from Petrarch's vein — "Would that I might touch Neobule's hand": *εἰ γὰρ ὡς ἐμοὶ γένοιτο χεῖρα Νεοβούλης θιγεῖν.* It is clear that women had a prominent place in the poetry of Stesichorus, and in his poem entitled *Calyce* we seem to have had an anticipation of the modern love romance. And yet, in spite of all this, we are informed that the Greeks had no love-poetry addressed to, or concerning women, before Anacreon.

The methods adopted for minimizing or disguising the importance of women in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are very amusing. "The Trojan war was the work of a woman; but how very little that woman appears in the *Iliad*." She

appears quite as frequently and imposingly as the action admits, and she and Andromache are painted as elaborately as any of the *dramatis personæ* in the poem. Indeed, it would not be too much to say that, with the exception of Achilles and Agamemnon, they leave the deepest impression on us. "A woman has been managing the affairs of Odysseus for twenty years in an exemplary fashion; but the hero of the *Odyssey* on his return prefers to associate with the swineherd." Comment is superfluous. Nothing could be more striking than the prominence which is given to women both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*. To cite such writers as Simonides of Amorgus, Phocylides and Theognis, as authorities on the position of women, is as absurd, in Sancho Panza's phrase, as to look for pears on an elm.

The Greek Tragedies are treated after the same fashion as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. We are told that the remarkable prominence given in Sophocles's plays to the affection between brother and sister affords conclusive proof that the nature of modern love between man and woman was unknown to him; and we are also informed, that the relations between Electra and Orestes, and Antigone and Polynices "are absolutely those of modern lovers." It would be difficult to say which is more absurd, the deduction or the statement. What love could be more loyal and more passionate than Hæmon's love for Antigone? The prominence given by

Sophocles to the love between brother and sister has its origin from the same cause as the very small part played by lovers in the Greek tragedies generally. In the first place, a poet who took his plot from the fortunes of the houses of Pelops or Laius could only work within the limits of tradition; in the second place, love romances, unless involving deep tragical issues as in the *Trachiniæ*, the *Medea*, and the *Hippolytus*, were totally incompatible with the Greek idea of tragedy. But we must hurry to the grand discovery made by the author of this volume.

Somewhere about 405 B.C. flourished Antimachus, of Colophon, the author of a voluminous epic, and of several other poems. He had the misfortune to lose his wife Lyde, and, to beguile his sorrow, he composed a long elegy in her honour. Of the far-reaching consequences of this act let our author speak. "When Antimachus first sat down in his empty house at Colophon to write an elegy to his dead wife, consciously or unconsciously he was initiating the greatest artistic revolution that the world has ever seen." Asclepiades and Philetas followed him as imitators, and the thing was done. Woman was at last "connected with 'romance.'" Our author admits the difficulty of supposing that "any one man could invent and popularize an entirely new emotion"; but suggests that if we regard it as "simply due to the readjustment of an already existing emotion," that is

παιδεραστία, such a supposition is "no longer absurd." It is not only absurd but monstrous.

The truth almost certainly is, that the love between man and woman in ancient Greece differed very little from the love between man and woman as it exists now. Marriage was, it is true, purely a matter of business; most wives aspired to nothing more than the management of the nursery and the household, and most women being without education, and living in seclusion, could scarcely associate, intellectually at least, on equal terms with their husbands or lovers. But this proves nothing more than *mariages de convenance*, and love based on the fascination exercised by sensuous attraction prove now. Then, as in our own time, there were marriages and marriages, liaisons and liaisons. The story which Plutarch tells of Callias (*Cimon.* iv.) shows that marriage was often based on love. The pictures given of Hector and Andromache in the *Iliad*, of Alcinous and Arete, of Ulysses and Penelope, of Menelaus and Helen in the *Odyssey*, the charming account of Ischomachus and his young wife in the *Œconomics* of Xenophon, the noble and pathetic story of Pantheia and Abradatas in the *Cyropædeia*, the story which, in his life of Agis,[1] Plutarch tells of Chilonis, and, in the *Morals*, of Camma,[2] and innumerable other legends, traditions, and anecdotes, prove that women could inspire and

[1] Agis, xvii., xviii. [2] De Mulierum Virtutibus.

return as pure and as chivalrous a love as any of the heroines of chivalry. The poet who could write about marriage as Homer does in the Sixth Odyssey would have had little to learn from modern refinement.[1] The love which Critobulus describes himself as having for Amandra, in the *Symposium* of Xenophon, and the remarks made by Socrates in that dialogue embody the most exalted conceptions of the passion of love between the sexes. The sentiments of Plutarch on this subject are indistinguishable from the most refined notions of the modern world, as is abundantly illustrated in the *Amatorius*, the *Conjugalia Præcepta*, and in the remarks on marriage in the eighth chapter of the Essay on Moral Virtue. If Ajax and Hercules became brutes, Tecmessa and Deianeira were not the only women who have discovered that men are, too often, May when they woo, and December when they wed. It is ridiculous to suppose that a people whose popular poetry could present such types of womanhood as Arete, Antigone, Alcestis, Deianeira, Electra, Macaria, Iphigenia, Evadne, and Polyxena, who could boast such poetesses as Sappho, Erinna, Corinna, Myrtis, and Damophila, and whose society was graced by such women as Aspasia, Diotima, Gnathæna, Herpyllis, Metaneira, and Leontium, should have given expression to passion, sentiment, and romance only in παιδικοὶ ὕμνοι.

[1] See particularly lines 180–185.

What the author of this book, and what others who are fond of generalizing about the Greeks, forget, is, that of a once vast and voluminous literature we have only fragments. That portion of their poetry which would have thrown light on the subject here discussed has perished. It is certain, for example, that of their lyric poetry a very large portion was erotic, of that portion exactly one poem has survived in its entirety, while a few hundred scattered lines, torn from their context, represent the rest that has come down to us. We know, again, that in some hundreds of their dramas, in the Middle and New Comedy that is to say, the plots turned on love—of these dramas not a single one is preserved. But the reflection of some twenty of them in Terence and Plautus, and several scattered fragments, clearly indicate, that the passion between the sexes involved as much sentiment and romance as it does in our Elizabethan dramatists. In what respect do Charinus and Pamphilus in the *Andria* and Antipho in the *Phormio*—mere replicas, of course, of Greek originals—differ from modern lovers? What could be more romantic than the love story which formed the plot of the *Phasma* of Menander? It is fair to our author to say that he fully admits this, in the only tolerably satisfactory part of his book, the chapter on Women in Greek Comedy. The great blot on Greek life, to which Mr. Benecke gives so much prominence,

has probably had far too much importance attached to it, partly, perhaps, owing to its accentuation in the writings of Plato, and partly owing to that rage for scandalous tittle-tattle, so unhappily characteristic of ancient anecdotemongers from Ion to Athenæus

MR. STEPHEN PHILLIPS' POEMS[1]

THE accent here is unmistakable, it is the accent of a new and a true poet. Mr. Phillips gives us no mere variations on familiar melodies, no clever copies of classical archetypes, and what is more, he has not employed any illegitimate means of attracting attention and giving distinction to his work. An audacious choice of subjects, the adoption of the stones which the builders have rejected, and, it may be added, disdained, has, when coupled with elaborate affectations and eccentricities of treatment and style, often enabled mediocrity to pass, temporarily at least, for genius, and the specious counterfeit of originality for the thing itself. But these poems are marked by simplicity, sincerity, spontaneity. If a discordant note is sometimes struck, here in an over-strained conceit, and there in an incongruous touch of preciosity or false sentiment, this is but an accident; in essentials all is genuine. Nature and passion affect to be speaking, and nature and passion really speak. A poet, of whom this may be said with truth, has passed the line which divides

[1] *Poems*. By Stephen Phillips. London and New York John Lane.

talent from genius, the true singer from the accomplished artist or imitator. He has taken his place, wherever that place may be, among authentic poets. To that high honour the present volume undoubtedly entitles Mr. Phillips. It would now, perhaps, be premature to say more than "Ingens omen habet magni clarique triumphi," but we may predict with confidence that, if fate is kind and his muse is true to him, he has a distinguished future before him. It may be safely said that no poet has made his *début* with a volume which is at once of such extraordinary merit and so rich in promise.

Mr. Phillips is not a poet who has "one plain passage of few notes." He strikes many chords, and strikes them often with thrilling power. The awful story narrated in *The Wife* is conceived and embodied with really Dantesque intensity and vividness; it has the master's suggestive reservation, smiting phrase, and clairvoyant picture wording, as "in the red shawl *sacredly* she burned," "smiled at him with her lips, not with her eyes"; while "Mother and child that food together ate" is, in pregnancy of tragic suggestiveness, almost worthy to stand with the "poscia, più che il dolor, poté il digiuno." Equally distinguished, though on another plane of interest, is *The woman with the dead Soul*, the soul which could once "wonder, laugh, and weep," but over which the days began to fall "dismally, as rain on ocean blear," till—

"Existence lean, in sky dead grey
Withholding steadily, starved it away."

If the pathos in these poems is almost "too deep for tears," it is gentler in the second and third of the lyrics, which are as exquisite as they are affecting. The idea in the lines *To Milton Blind,* is worthy of Milton's own sublime conceit, that the darkness which had fallen on his eyes was but the shadow of God's protecting wings. The whole poem, indeed, is a beautiful paraphrase of the noble passage in the *Second Defence of the People of England* : "For the Divine law" —we give it in the English translation—"not only shields me from injury, but almost renders me too sacred to attack, not indeed so much from the privation of my sight as from the overshadowing of those heavenly wings which seem to have occasioned this obscurity; and which, when occasioned, he is wont to illuminate with an interior light more precious and more pure."

In *The Lily,* which is a little obscure—a fault against which Mr. Phillips would do well to guard, for he frequently offends in this respect —we have the note of Petrarch, but Petrarch would not have ended the poem so flatly. Tennyson is recalled, too nearly perhaps, in "By the Sea," but it is a poem of great charm and beauty. *The New De Profundis* is, unhappily, the key to Mr. Phillips' characteristic mood; it reminds us of the curse imposed on the worldling in Browning's *Easter Day,* before he has learned the use of life and doubt.

Mr. Phillips' two most ambitious poems are *Christ in Hades* and *Marpessa.* In *Christ in Hades* he fails, as Mrs. Browning failed in *The Drama of Exile.* He attempts a theme—a stupendous theme—to which his genius is not equal, and which could only have been adequately treated by such poets as Dante and Milton, in the maturity of their powers. It has neither basis nor superstructure. It is what the Greeks would call "meteoric" as distinguished from "sublime." It is a weird, wild, and chaotic dream; and yet for all this its appeal to the heart and the imagination is piercing and direct. Like Tennyson, Mr. Phillips has the art of unfolding the full significance of a few suggestive words in a great classic; and nothing could be more effective than the use to which he has applied the famous lines which Homer places in the mouth of Achilles. Poetry has few things more pathetic than Homer's picture of Hades and the dead, and that pathos Mr. Phillips has given us in quintessence, as few would question after reading the lines which describe Persephone yearning for her return to the spring-illumined world, the speech of the Athenian ghost, and the woman's address to Christ. If the world depicted has something of Horace's artistic monster, or, to change the image, something of the anarchy of dreams in its composition, the vividness and picturesqueness with which particular figures and scenes are flashed into light and definition is extraordinarily

impressive. It is so with the central figure, Christ; it is so with Prometheus; and the contrast between these martyrs for man has both pathos and grandeur.

There is more originality, more power in *Christ in Hades* than in *Marpessa*, but *Marpessa* has more balance, more sanity, more of the stuff out of which good and abiding poetry is made, than its predecessor. The one savours of the spasmodic school, the productions of which have rarely been found to have the principle of life, however rich they may have been in promise; the other is a return to a school in which most of those who have gained permanent fame have studied. And we are glad to find a young poet there.

But it would be doing Mr. Phillips great injustice not to note that, though he has had many predecessors in the semi-classical, semi-romantic re-treatment of the Greek myths, notably Keats in *Hyperion*, Wordsworth in *Dion* and *Laodamia*, Landor in his *Hellenics*, and Tennyson in *Ænone* and *Tithonus*, he has treated his theme with a distinction which is all his own, and has impressed on it an intense individuality. In comparison with these masters he may be *pauper*, but he is *pauper in suo œre.*

It would be easy to point to faults in Mr. Phillips' work. His sense of rhythm, even allowing for what are plainly deliberate experiments in discord, seems often curiously defective. How

stiff and limping, for example, is the following:—

> "O pity us,
> For I would ask of thee only to look
> Upon the wonderful sunlight and to smell
> Earth in the rain. Is not the labourer
> Returning heavy through the August sheaves
> Against the setting sun, who gladly smells
> His supper from the opening door—is he
> Not happier than these melancholy kings?
> How good it is to live, even at the worst!
> God was so lavish to us once, but here
> He hath repented, jealous of His beams."

Lines, again, like "Pierced her, and odour full of arrows was," "Realizes all the uncoloured dawn," 'Yet followed a riddled memorable flag," are, no doubt, extreme instances, but they are typical of many bad lines. Occasionally he falls flat on some harsh prosaic phrase, like "beautiful indolence *was on our brains*." Nor is he always happy in his attempts at novelty in phraseology, as in his employment of the words "liable," "inaccurate," "pungent"; and these faults in rhythm and diction are the more remarkable, as the really subtle mastery over rhythmic expression which he exhibits at times, and his singularly felicitous epithets, turns, and phrases are among his most striking gifts. Take a few out of very many: "A bleak magnificence of endless hope," "That common trivial face, of endless needs," "The mystic river, floating wan," "And the moist evening fallow, richly dark," "That palest rose sweet on the night of life." How noble is the rhythm and imagery of the following:—

> "All the dead
> The melancholy attraction of Jesus felt:
> And millions, like a sea, wave upon wave,
> Heaved dreaming to that moonlight face, or ran
> In wonderful long ripples, sorrow-charmed.
> Toward him, in faded purple, pacing came
> Dead emperors, and sad, unflattered kings;
> Unlucky captains, listless armies led:
> Poets with music frozen on their lips
> Toward the pale brilliance sighed."

And it would be easy to multiply illustrations from *Marpessa* and *By the Sea.* Occasionally there is a certain incongruity between the form and the matter. A poem so essentially, so intensely realistic as *The Wife* should not have such quaintnesses as "palèd in her thought." Nor should we have

> "The constable, with lifted hand,
> Conducting the orchestral Strand";

nor should a railway station be described as a "moonèd terminus." Nothing is so disenchanting as affectation.

One cannot but add that these poems, welcome as they are, would have been more welcome still, had they been less profoundly melancholy. Their monotonous sadness, the persistency with which they dwell on all those grim and melancholy realities which poetry should help us to forget, or cheer us in enduring, is not merely their leading, but their pervading characteristic. This note will, we hope, change. Leopardi is immortal, and could not be spared; but one Leopardi is enough for a single century.

THE ILLUSTRIOUS OBSCURE[1]

SOME nineteen hundred years ago Horace observed that there was one thing which neither gods, nor men, nor bookstalls would tolerate in a poet—and that was mediocrity. The verdict of gods, men, and the bookstalls is probably still what it was then; but to such tribunals the rhymesters of our time can afford to be quite indifferent. Paper and printing are cheap; small poets and small critics are now so numerous that they form a world, and a populous world, in themselves; and, well understanding the truth of the old proverb, "Concordiâ parvæ res crescunt," they mutually manufacture the wreaths with which they crown each other's modest vanity. There are hundreds of "poets" and "critics" of whom the great world knows nothing, who are thus enabled, in their little day, to taste all the sweets of fame, and "walk with inward glory crown'd." To wage serious war

[1] *West Country Poets: Their Lives and Works, etc* Illustrated with Portraits. By W. H. Kearley Wright, F.R.H.S. London: Elliot Stock. 1896.

against such a tribe as this would be as absurd as to break butterflies upon a wheel; but we really think it high time that some protest should be made against the indefinite multiplication of the rubbish for which these people and their patrons are responsible, and still more against its importation into what purports to be a contribution to serious literature. As long as these geniuses confine themselves to their proper sphere, the poets' corners of provincial newspapers, we have nothing to say. But it becomes quite another matter when the skill of an ingenious projector enables—we are really sorry to have to speak so harshly—a rabble of poetasters to figure side by side with poets of classical fame, and to appear in all the dignity of contributors to a national anthology. Yet such is the design of this volume, which was, it seems, published by subscription, the subscribers being for the most part the various candidates for poetical fame, who have obligingly sent their portraits and their biographies for insertion in Mr. Kearley Wright's "monumental work." As Mr. Kearley Wright's collection begins with the fifteenth century, and includes the really eminent poets who happen to have been born in the West of England, many of his worthies are naturally *apud plures*, but the majority, in whose honour the anthology appears to have been compiled, adorn the living. And very gratifying it must be for these gentlemen, and for Mr.

Kearley Wright himself—for he also has a niche—to find themselves side by side with Sir Walter Raleigh, Herrick, Gay, and Coleridge.

Mr. Kearley Wright's "company of makers" is certainly a motley one. First comes among his living bards an inspired porter at the Teignmouth railway station, who asks in rapture,—

> "Along the glitt'ring streets of gold,
> Amid the brilliant glare,
> Shall we God's banner there unfold,
> His righteous helmet wear?"

At no great distance follows, with a portrait looking intensely intellectual, "the manager of the Bristol and South Wales Railway Waggon Company, Limited," whose poems are described as "lacking here and there logical sequence and literary method," but "evincing undoubtedly a great poetical disposition and philosophical drift." The two poems which illustrate this poet's genius afford very little proof either of "a great poetical disposition" or of "a philosophical drift," but painfully conclusive proof that much more is lacking than "logical sequence and literary method," the lack of which may certainly be conceded as well. Next comes Mr. Jonas Coaker, "the landlord of the Warren House Inn," whose verses "disclose a poetic spirit, and, had he possessed the advantages of education, would doubtless have attracted some attention." Mr. Coaker is in the main autobiographical.

"I drew my breath first on the moor,
There my forefathers dwelled;
Its hills and dales I've traversed o'er,
Its desert parts beheld.
* * * *
It's oft envelop'd in a fog,
Because it's up so high."

And Mr. Coaker continues in the same strain further than we care to transcribe. Then we have Mr. John Goodwin, "formerly a coach-guard, who sung of the days when there was such a thing, if we may so phrase it, as the poetry of locomotion." In his poetry, we are told, "there is a genuine ring," as here, for example:—

"I mind the time, when I was guard,
The lord, the duke, or squire
Would travel by the old stage-coach,
Or post-chaise they would hire."

Mr. Charles Chorley, who is, we are informed, submanager of the Truro Savings Bank, in verses which are presumably a parody of Sir William Jones' *Imitation of Alcæus*, inquires, not without a certain propriety, "What constitutes a mine?" On a par with all these are the verses of the bard who "in summer hawked gooseberries and in winter shoelaces," and those of the "uneducated journeyman woolcomber."

Now, we need hardly say that the humble vocations of these poets are neither derogatory to them nor in any way detrimental to merit

where merit exists; but there is no merit whatever in the poems assigned to them in this volume; they are simply such poems as hawkers, woolcombers, railway porters, and submanagers of provincial banks—"who pen a stanza when they should engross"—might be expected to write. The same may be said of almost every copy of verses, produced by amateurs, to be found in this collection. We have scarcely noticed a single poem which rises above mediocrity; a very large proportion are below even a mediocre standard—they are simply rubbish. In one poet only, among those whose names were not before known to us, do we discern genius, and that is in Mr. John Dryden Hosken, whose poem, entitled *My Masters*, is really excellent.

The editor of this anthology is plainly incompetent, both in point of taste and critical discernment, and in point of knowledge, for the task which he has undertaken. The first is proved by the extracts which he has selected from the works of well-known poets. Coleridge, for example, is represented by two comparatively inferior poems, *The Devil's Thoughts* and *Fancy in Nubibus*; Thomas Carew, by two short poems, one of which is probably the worst he ever wrote; Herrick, by two of his very worst; Praed, by two of the feeblest and least characteristic of his poems; Walcot, by mere trash. It is quite possible that their less illustrious brethren may have suffered from the deplorable inability of

this editor to discern between what is good and what is bad. Certainly Capern, who was a poet with a touch of genius, suffers, for the lyric given is very far indeed from representing or illustrating his best or even his characteristic work. In giving an account of Alexander Barclay, who, by the way, is called Andrew in the Preface, Mr. Wright says nothing about his most important poems—his Eclogues. If Eustace Budgell is included among the poets, why are not his poems specified and represented? Of Aaron Hill it is observed that "neither his reputation as a poet nor his connexion with the county of Devon is sufficient to warrant more than a mere notice of his name." Aaron Hill was the author of more than one poem of conspicuous merit. The verses attributed on page 488 to Sir William Yonge were written by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. But these are trifles. What we wish to protest against is the foisting of such volumes as these on our libraries; and it is appalling to learn that it is the intention of Mr. Kearley Wright, if he is sufficiently encouraged by subscribers, to follow this with another similar collection. If poets like these wish to gratify their vanity, let them not gratify it to the detriment of serious literature; for, if the few can discriminate, the many cannot, and the multiplication of works like these must infallibly tend to lower the standard of current literature, by furthering the disastrous "cult of the average

man." In our opinion criticism can have no more imperative duty than to discountenance and discourage in every way such projectors as Mr. Kearley Wright and such poets as those for whose merits he and critics like him stand sponsors.

VIRGIL IN ENGLISH HEXAMETERS[1]

SIR GEORGE OSBORNE MORGAN has served his generation in much more important capacities than those of a scholar and a translator of Virgil, and had this little work, therefore, been less meritorious than it is, no critic with a sense of the becoming would deal harshly with it. But it challenges and deserves serious consideration, not only as an attempt to solve a problem of singular interest to students of classical poetry, but as a somewhat ambitious contribution to the literature of translation. Sir Osborne Morgan is, however, mistaken in supposing that in translating Virgil into his own metre he "has undertaken a task which has never been attempted before." In 1583 Richard Stanihurst published a translation of the first four books of the *Æneid* in English hexameters; and, if Sir Osborne will turn to Webbe's *Discourse of English Poetrie*, published as early as 1586, he will find versions in English

[1] *The Eclogues of Virgil.* Translated into English Hexameter Verse by the Right Hon. Sir George Osborne Morgan, Bart., Q.C., M.P. London.

hexameters of the First and Second Eclogues, while Abraham Fraunce, in a curious volume, entitled *The Countess of Pembroke's Ivy Church*, which appeared in 1591, has, among the other hexameters in the collection, given a version of the Second Eclogue in this measure. But Sir Osborne Morgan has been more immediately anticipated in his experiment. In 1838 Dr. James Blundell published anonymously, under the title of *Hexametrical Experiments*, versions in hexameters of the First, Fourth, Sixth, and Tenth Eclogues, and to this translation he prefixed an elaborate preface, vindicating the employment of the hexameter in English, and explaining its mechanism to the unlearned. Indeed, Blundell arrived at the same conclusion as Sir Osborne Morgan, that the proper medium for an English translation of hexametrical poems in Greek and Latin is the English hexameter. We may, however, hasten to add that Sir Osborne has little to fear from a comparison with his predecessors, who have, indeed, done their best to refute by example their own theory. It may be observed, in passing, that the translations of Virgil into rhymed decasyllabic verse are far more numerous than Sir Osborne Morgan seems to suppose. He is, he says, acquainted only with two—the version by Dryden and Joseph Warton—not seeming to be aware that Warton translated only the *Georgics* and *Eclogues*, printing Pitt's version of the *Æneid*. The

whole of Virgil was translated into this measure by John Ogilvie between 1649–50, and by the Earl of Lauderdale about 1716, while versions of the *Æneid*, the *Georgics*, and the *Eclogues*, in the same metre, have abounded in every era of our literature, from Gawain Douglas's translation of the *Æneid* printed in 1553, to Archdeacon Wrangham's version of the *Eclogues* in 1830.

It is no reproach to Sir Osborne Morgan that, in the occupations of a busy political life, his scholarship should have become a little rusty, but it is a pity that he should so often have allowed himself to be caught tripping, when a little timely counsel in the correction of his proof sheets might have prevented this. In the First Eclogue the line

> "Non insueta graves temptabunt pabula fetas"

is translated

> "Here no unwonted herb shall tempt the travailing cattle."

What it really means is, no change of fodder, no fodder which is strange to them, shall "infect" or "try" the pregnant cattle, "insueta" being used in exactly the same sense as in Eclogue V. 56, "*insuetum* miratur limen Olympi," and "temptare" as it is used in Georg. III. 441, and commonly in classical Latin. It is, to say the least, questionable whether in the couplet—

"Pauperis et tuguri congestum cæspite culmen,
Post aliquot, mea regna videns, mirabor aristas?"—

the last line can mean

"Gaze on the straggling corn, the remains of what once was my kingdom."

"Aristas" is much more likely to be a metonymy for "messes," *i.e.* "annos," like *ἄροτον* in Sophocles' *Trachiniæ*, 69, *τὸν μὲν παρελθόντ' ἄροτον*, a confirmative illustration which seems to have escaped the commentators; but it is difficult to say, and Sir Osborne has, it must be owned, excellent authority for his interpretation. In Eclogue III. the somewhat difficult passage

"pocula ponam
Fagina . . .
Lenta quibus torno facili superaddita vitis
Diffusos hedera vestit pallente corymbos"—

i.e. "where the limber vine wreathed round them by the deft graving tool is twined with pale ivy's spreading clusters,"—is translated:

"Over whose side the vine by a touch of the graving tool added
Mantles its clustering grapes in the paler leaves of the ivy."

This is quite wrong. "Corymbos" cannot possibly mean clusters of grapes, but clusters of ivy berries, "hederâ pallente" being substituted, after Virgil's manner, for "hederæ pallentis." In Eclogue IV. 24 there is no reason for supposing that the "fallax herba veneni" is

hemlock; it is much more likely to be aconite. In line 45 "sandyx" should be translated not "purple" but "crimson," vague as the colour indicated by "purple" is. In Eclogue V.

> "Si quos aut Phyllidis ignes,
> Aut Alconis habes laudes, aut jurgia Codri"

is not

> "Phyllis's fiery loves you would sing or the quarrels of Codrus,"

but "your passion for Phyllis, your invectives against Codrus," "ignes" being used far more becomingly for a man's love than for a woman's. So, again, "pro purpureo narcisso" cannot mean what nature never saw, "purple daffodil," but the white narcissus. In Eclogue VIII. "Sophocleo tua carmina digna cothurno" is turned by what is obviously a *lapsus calami*, "worthy of Sophocles' sock." A scholar like Sir Osborne Morgan does not need reminding that the "sock" is a metonymy for Comedy, as Milton anglicizes it in *L'Allegro*, "if Jonson's learned sock be on." In the exquisite passage in Eclogue VIII. 41—

> "Jam fragiles poteram ab terrâ contingere ramos"—

to translate "fragiles" as "frail" is to miss the whole point of the epithet. What Virgil means is, "I could just reach the branches from the ground and *break them off*"; if it is to be translated by one epithet, it must be "brittle." Again in the Ninth Eclogue the words

"quâ *se subducere colles*
Incipiunt, mollique jugum demittere clivo,"

do not mean "where the hills with gentle depression steal away into the plain," but the very opposite: *i.e.* "Where the hills begin to draw themselves up from the plain," the ascent being contemplated from below. In Eclogue IX., in turning the couplet

"Nam neque adhuc Vario videor, nec dicere Cinnâ
Digna, sed argutos inter strepere anser olores,"

the translator has no authority for turning the last verse into "a cackling goose in a chorus of cygnets," for there is no tradition that cygnets sang, and goose should have been printed with a capital letter to preserve the pun, the allusion being to a poetaster named Anser. Unfortunately for the English translator, our literature can boast no counterpart to "Anser" *totidem literis*, but Goose printed with a capital is near enough to preserve, or suggest the sarcasm. There is another slip in Eclogue X.: "Ferulas" is not "wands of willow" but "fennel."

Occasionally a touch is introduced which is neither authorized by the original, nor true to nature. There is nothing, for instance to warrant, in Eclogue I. 56, the epithet "odorous" as applied to the willow, nor does "salictum" mean a "willow" but a "willow-bed or plantation." To translate "ubi tempus erit" by "when the hour shall have struck" reminds us of Shakespeare's famous anachronism in

Julius Cæsar and is as surprising in the work of a scholar as the lengthening of the penultimate in arbutus, "Sweet is the shower to the blade, To the newly weaned kid the arbutus." As a rule, the translator turns difficult passages very skilfully, but this is not the case with the couplet which concludes the "Pollio":—

> "Incipe, parve puer: cui non risere parentes
> Nec deus hunc mensâ, dea nec dignata cubili est";

that is, the "babe on whom the parent never smiled, no god ever deemed worthy of his board, no goddess of her bed"—in other words, he can never enjoy the rewards of a hero like Hercules; but there is neither sense nor skill, and something very like a serious grammatical error, in

> "Who knows not the smile of a parent,
> Neither the board of a god nor the bed of a goddess is worthy."

But to turn from comparative trifles. No one who reads this version of the *Eclogues* can doubt that Sir Osborne Morgan has proved his point, that the English hexameter, when skilfully used, is the measure best adapted for reproducing Virgil's music in English. The following passage (*Ec.* VII. 45–48) is happily turned; let us place the original beside the translation:—

> "Muscosi fontes et somno mollior herba,
> Et quæ vos rarâ viridis tegit arbutus umbrâ,
> Solstitium pecori defendite: jam venit æstas
> Torrida, jam læto turgent in palmite gemmæ."

"Moss-grown fountains and sward more soft than the softest of slumbers,
Arbutus tree that flings over both its flickering shadows,
Shelter my flock from the sun. Already the summer is on us,
Summer that scorches up all! See the bud on the glad vine is swelling."

Again (*Ec.* X. 41–48) :—

"Serta mihi Phyllis legeret, cantaret Amyntas:
Hic gelidi fontes, hic mollia prata, Lycori,
Hic nemus: hic ipso tecum consumerer ævo.
Nunc insanus amor duri me Martis in armis
Tela inter media atque adversos detinet hostes:
Tu procul a patriâ—nec sit mihi credere tantum!—
Alpinas, ah dura, nives et frigora Rheni
Me sine sola vides."

"Phyllis would gather me flowers and Amyntas a melody chant me;
Cool is the fountain's wave and soft is the meadow, Lycoris;
Shady the grove! Here with thee I would die of old age in the greenwood.
Mad is the lust of war, that now in the heart of the battle
Chains me where darts fall fast, and the charge of the foemen is fiercest,
Far, far away from your home—Oh, would that I might not believe it—
Lost amid Alpine snows or the frozen desolate Rhineland,
Lonely without me you wander."

Many other felicitous passages might be quoted; indeed, there is no Eclogue without them; but the translator is not sure-footed, and, if he occasionally illustrates the hexameter in its excellence, he illustrates, unhappily too

often, some of its worst defects. Two qualities are indispensable to the success of this measure in English. Our language, unlike the classical languages, being accentual and not quantitative, if the long syllable is not represented where the stress naturally falls, and the short syllables where it does not fall, the effect is sometimes grotesque, sometimes distressing, and always unsatisfactory. Nothing, for example, could be worse in their various ways than the following:—

"Wept when you saw they were given the lad, and had you not managed."
"Let not the frozen air harm you."
"Scatter the sand with his hind hoofs."
"The pliant growth of the osier."
"Worthy of Sophocles' sock, trumpet-tongued through the Universe echo."
"Own'd it himself, and yet he would not deliver it to me."

A very nice ear, too, is required to adjust the collocation of words in which either vowels or consonants predominate, and the relative position of monosyllabic and polysyllabic words, the predominance of the former in our language increasing enormously the difficulty. No measure, moreover, so easily runs into intolerable monotony — a monotony which Clough sought to avoid by overweighting his verses with spondees, and which Longfellow illustrates by the cloying predominance of the dactylic movement. Sir Osborne Morgan tells us that he took Kingsley as his model.

Kingsley's hexameters are respectable, but they have no distinction, and he had certainly not a good ear. Longfellow's are far better, and are sometimes exquisitely felicitous, as in a couplet like the following, which, with the exception of one word, is flawless :—

> "Men whose lives glided on like the rivers that water the woodlands,
> Darken'd by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of Heaven."

Probably the best hexameters which have been composed in English are those in William Watson's *Hymn to the Sea* and those in which Hawtry translated Iliad III. 234–244, and the parting of Hector and Andromache in the Sixth Iliad, models—these versions—not merely of translation, but of hexametrical structure. There are, however, certain magical effects, particularly in the Virgilian hexameter, produced by an exquisite but audacious tact in the employment of licences, which can never be reproduced in English.

Such would be—

> "Nam neque Parnassi vobis juga, nam neque Pindi
> Ulla moram fecere, neque Aonie Aganippe.
> Illum etiam lauri, etiam flevere myricæ;
> Pinifer illum etiam solâ sub rupe jacentem
> Mænalus et gelidi fleverunt saxa Lycæi."

Milton, and Milton alone among Englishmen, had the secret of this music, but he elicited it from another instrument.

THE LATEST EDITION OF THOMSON[1]

"JACOB THOMSON, ein vergessener Dichter des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts"—a forgotten poet of the eighteenth century—such is the title of a recent monograph on the author of *The Seasons* by Dr. G. Schmeding. Dr. G. Schmeding is, however, so obliging as to pronounce that, in his opinion, this ought not to be Thomson's fate; that there remains in his work, especially in *The Seasons* merit enough to entitle him to be "enrolled among poets," and to find appreciation, at all events in schools and reading societies. Dr. Schmeding may rest assured that Thomson's fame is quite safe. It has no doubt suffered, as that of all the poets of the eighteenth century has suffered, by the great revolution which has, in the course of the last ninety years, passed over literary tastes and fashions. But during the present century there have been no less than twenty editions of his

[1] *The Poetical Works of James Thomson.* A New Edition, with Memoir and Critical Appendices, by the Rev. D. C. Tovey. 2 vols. London.

poems, to say nothing of separate editions of *The Seasons*; while his works, or portions of them, have been translated into German, Italian, modern Greek, and Russian. Only two years ago M. Léon Morel, in his *J. Thomson, sa vie et ses œuvres*, published an elaborate and admirable monograph on this "forgotten poet." And now Mr. Tovey, who, we are glad to see, has been appointed Clarke Lecturer at Cambridge, has given us a new biography of him and a new edition of his works, making, if we are not mistaken, the thirty-second memoir of him and the twenty-first edition of his works which have appeared since the beginning of the century. This is pretty well for a forgotten poet!

Mr. Tovey's name is a sufficient guarantee for accurate and scholarly work. But it might naturally be asked, what is there to justify another edition of this poet, when so many editions are already in the field and so easily accessible? We have little difficulty in answering this question. The special features of Mr. Tovey's edition are as important as they are interesting. In the first place, he has given us a much fuller biography than has hitherto appeared in English; in the second place, he has thrown much interesting light on the political bearing of Thomson's dramas; and, in the third place, he has given, what no other editor of Thomson has given, a full collation of Thomson's own MS. corrections, preserved in Mitford's copy, now deposited in the

British Museum. The critical notes have cost him, he says, and we can quite believe it, much time and labour, and in his preface he half apologizes for what may seem "a ridiculous travesty of more important labours." There was no necessity for such an apology: he observes justly that he has "not spent more pains on Thomson's text than so many of our scholars bestow upon some Greek and Latin poets whose intrinsic merit is no greater than Thomson's."

To serious readers these critical notes will constitute the most valuable part of Mr. Tovey's labours; they are, in truth, the speciality of this particular edition, and will make it indispensable to all students of this most interesting poet. And now Mr. Tovey will, we trust, forgive us if, with due deference, we point out what seem to us to be defects in his work. The first thing that might have been expected from so learned and careful an editor of Thomson was an adequate discussion of the great problem of the authorship of *Rule Britannia*, and the second an exposure of one of the most extraordinary "mare's-nests" to be found in English literature. But nothing, we regret to say, can be more perfunctory and inadequate than the two notes in which the first question is hurried over with references to *Notes and Queries*, and nothing more irritating than the confusion worse confounded in which Mr. Tovey leaves the second. We

shall therefore make no apology for entering somewhat at length into both these questions,

And first for the authorship of *Rule Britannia.* The facts are these. In 1740 Thomson and Mallet wrote, in conjunction, a masque entitled *Alfred,* which, on 1st August in that year, was represented before the Prince and Princess of Wales at Clifden. It was in two acts, and it contained six lyrics, the last being *Rule Britannia,* which is entitled an "Ode," the music being by Dr. Arne. In 1745 Arne turned the piece into an opera, and also into "a musical drama." By this time the lyric had become very popular, but there is no evidence to show that it had been definitely attributed to either of the coadjutors. In 1748 Thomson died. In 1751 Mallet re-issued *Alfred,* but in another form. It was entirely remodelled, and almost entirely re-written, and, in an advertisement prefixed to the work, he says: "According to the present arrangement of the fable I was obliged to reject a great deal of what I had written in the other: neither could I retain, of my friend's part, more than three or four speeches, and a part of one song." Now, of the parts retained from the former work, there were the first three stanzas of *Rule Britannia,* the three others being excised, and their place supplied by three stanzas written by Lord Bolingbroke. If Mallet is to be believed, then, "part of one song" must refer, either to a song in the third scene of the second

act, beginning "From those eternal regions bright," or to *Rule Britannia*, for these are the only lyrics in which portions of the lyrics in the former edition are retained. *Rule Britannia* is, it is true, entitled "An Ode" in the former edition, and the other lyric "A Song," so that Mallet would certainly seem to imply that what he had retained of his friend's work was the portion of the song referred to, and not *Rule Britannia*. But, as Mallet was notoriously a man who could not be believed on oath, and was an adept in all those bad arts by which little men filch honours which do not belong to them, if he is to be allowed to have any title to the honour of composing this lyric, it ought to rest on something better than the ambiguity between the word " Ode " and the word "Song."

There is no evidence that, while both were alive, either Thomson or Mallet claimed the authorship; but this is certain, it was printed at Edinburgh, during Mallet's lifetime, in the second edition of a well-known song book, entitled *The Charmer*, with Thomson's initials appended to it. It is certain that Mallet had friends in Edinburgh, and it is equally certain that neither he nor any of his friends raised any objection to its ascription to Thomson. In 1743, in 1759, and in 1762 Mallet published collections of poems, but in none of these collections does he lay claim to *Rule Britannia*, and, though it was printed in song-books in 1749, 1750, and 1761, it is in

no case assigned to Mallet. None of his contemporaries, so far as we know, attributed it to him, and it is remarkable that, in a brief obituary notice of him which appeared in the *Scots Magazine* in 1765, he is spoken of as the author of the famous ballad *William and Margaret*, but not a word is said about *Rule Britannia.* A further presumption in Thomson's favour is this: in all probability Dr. Arne, who set it to music, knew the authorship, and he survived both Thomson and Mallet, dying in 1778. The song had become very popular and celebrated, so that if Mallet had desired to have the credit of its composition, it is strange that he should not have laid claim to it, had his claim been a good one. But if his claim was not good, he could hardly have ventured to claim the authorship, as Dr. Arne would have been in his way. It is quite possible that the ambiguity in the advertisement to the recension of 1751 was designed; it certainly left the question open, and we cannot but think there is something very suspicious in what follows the sentence in Mallet's advertisement, where he speaks of his having used so little of his friend's work. "I mention this expressly," he adds, "that, whatever faults are found in the present performance, they may be charged, as they ought to be, entirely to my account." A vainer and more unscrupulous man than Mallet never existed; and, while it is simply incredible that he should

not have claimed what would have constituted his chief title to popularity as a poet, had he been able to do so, it is in exact accordance with his established character that he should, as he did in the advertisement of 1751, have left himself an opportunity of asserting that claim, should those who were privy to the secret have predeceased him, and thus enabled him to do so with impunity.

The internal evidence—and on this alone the question must now be argued—seems to us conclusive in Thomson's favour. The Ode is simply a translation into lyrics of what finds embodiment in Thomson's *Britannia*, in the fourth and fifth parts of *Liberty*, and in his Verses to the Prince of Wales. Coming to details, there can be no doubt that the third stanza—

> "Still more majestic shalt thou rise,
> More dreadful from each foreign stroke;
> As the loud blast that tears the skies
> Serves but to root thy native oak"—

was suggested by Horace's

> "Duris ut ilex tonsa bipennibus
> Nigræ feraci frondis in Algido,
> Per damna, per cædes, ab ipso
> Ducit opes animumque ferro."

Now, not only was Horace, as innumerable imitations and reminiscences prove, one of Thomson's favourite poets, but Thomson has, in the third part of *Liberty* translated this very passage:—

"Like an oak,
Nurs'd on feracious Algidum, whose boughs
Still stronger shoot beneath the rigid axe
By loss, by slaughter, from the steel itself
E'en force and spirit drew."

He has, elsewhere, two other reminiscences of the same passage, once in the third part of *Liberty*—

"Every tempest sung
Innoxious by, or bade it firmer stand"—

and once in *Sophonisba* (Act V. sc. ii.) :—

"Thy rooted worth
Has stood these wintry blasts, grown stronger by them."

The epithet "azure" employed in the first stanza is, with "cerulean" and "aerial," one of the three commonest epithets in Thomson, the three occurring at least twenty times in his poetry. A somewhat cursory examination of his works has enabled us to find that "azure" or "azured" alone occurs ten times. "Generous," too, in the Latin sense of the term, is another of his favourite words, it being used no less than sixteen times in *Britannia* and *Liberty* alone. Another of his favourite allusions is to England's "native oaks." Thus in *Britannia* he speaks of—

"Your oaks, peculiar harden'd, shoot
Strong into sturdy growth ;"

in the last part of *Liberty* we find "Let her own naval oak be basely torn," and in the same part

of the poem he speaks of the "venerable oaks" and "kindred floods." The epithet "manly" and the phrase "the fair"—"manly hearts to guard the fair"—are also peculiarly Thomsonian, being repeatedly employed by him, the phrase "the fair" occurring in his poetry at least six times, if not oftener. "Flame," too, is another of his favourite words.

> "All their attempts to bend thee down
> Will but arouse," etc.,

is exactly the sentiment in *Britannia.*

> "Your hearts
> Swell with a sudden courage, growing still
> As danger grows."

The stanza beginning "To thee belongs," etc., is simply a lyrical paraphrase of the passage in *Britannia* commencing "Oh first of human blessings," and of a couplet in the last part of *Liberty* :—

> "The winds and seas are Britain's wide domain.
> And not a sail but by permission spreads."

The couplet

> "All thine shall be the subject main,
> And every shore it circles thine"

is simply the echo of a couplet in the fifth part of *Liberty*—

> "All ocean is her own, and every land
> To whom her ruling thunder ocean bears."

The phrase "blessed isle," as applied to England,

he employs three times in *Liberty*. Again, the stanza in which *Rule Britannia* is written is the stanza in which the majority of Thomson's minor lyrics are written, and the rhythm and cadence, not less than the tone, colour and sentiment, are exactly his.

Mallet was undoubtedly an accomplished man and a respectable poet, as his ballad *William and Margaret*, his *Edwin and Emma*, and his *Birks of Invermay* sufficiently prove, but he has written nothing tolerable in the vein of *Rule Britannia*. Neatness, and tenderness bordering on effeminacy, mark his characteristic lyrics, and, if we except a few lines in his *Tyburn* and the eight concluding lines in a poem entitled *A Fragment*, there is no virility in his poetry at all. Of the patriotism and ardent love of liberty which pervade Thomson's poems, and which glow so intensely in *Rule Britannia*, he has absolutely nothing. Nor are there any analogues or parallels in his poems to this lyric either in form—for if we are not mistaken, he has never employed the stanza in which it is written—or in imagery, or phraseology. Like Thomson, whom, in his narrative blank-verse poems, he servilely imitates, he is fond of the words "azure" and "aerial"; and the word "azure" is the only verbal coincidence linking the phraseology of his acknowledged poems with the lyric in question. It may be added, too, that a man who was capable of the jingling

rubbish of such a masque as *Britannia*, and who had the execrable taste to substitute Bolingbroke's stanzas for the stanzas which they supersede, could hardly have been equal to the production of this lyric. We believe, then, that there can be no reasonable doubt that the honour of composing *Rule Britannia* belongs to Thomson the bard, and not to Mallet the fribble.

But to return to Mr. Tovey and the "mare's-nest" to which we have referred. This mare's-nest is the assumption that Pope assisted Thomson in revising *The Seasons*. Since Robert Bell's edition this has come to be received as an established fact, but we propose to show that it rests on a hypothesis demonstrably baseless.

There is, in the British Museum, an interleaved copy of the first volume of the London edition of Thomson's works, dated 1738, and the part of the volume which contains *The Seasons* is full of manuscript deletions, corrections, and additions. These are in two handwritings, the one being unmistakably the handwriting of Thomson, the other beyond all question the handwriting of some one else. Almost all these corrections were inserted in the edition prepared for the press in 1744, and now, consequently, form part of the present text. The corrections in the hand which is not the hand of Thomson are, in many cases, of extraordinary merit, showing a fineness of ear and delicacy of touch quite above the reach of Thomson himself. We will give

two or three samples. Thomson had written in *Autumn* 290 seqq. :—

> "With harvest shining all these fields are thine,
> And if my rustics may presume so far,
> Their master, too, who then indeed were blest
> To make the daughter of Acasto so."

The unknown corrector substitutes the present reading :—

> "The fields, the master, all, my fair, are thine;
> If to the various blessings which thy house
> Has lavished on me thou wilt add that bliss,
> That dearest bliss, the power of blessing thee!"

The other is famous. Thomson had written :—

> "Thoughtless of beauty, she was beauty's self,
> Recluse among the woods, if City-dames
> Will deign their faith. And thus she went compell'd
> By strong necessity, with as serene
> And pleased a look as patience can put on,
> To glean Palemon's fields."

For these vapid and dissonant verses is substituted by the corrector, who very properly retains the first verse, what is now the text :—

> "Recluse amid the close embow'ring woods,
> As in the hollow breast of Apennine,
> Beneath the shelter of encircling hills,
> A myrtle rises, far from human eyes,
> And breathes its balmy fragrance o'er the wild.
> So flourished blooming, and unseen by all,
> The sweet Lavinia," etc.

The transformation of a single line is often most felicitous: thus in *Winter* the flat line

> "Through the lone night that bids the waves arise"

is grandly altered into

> "Through the black night that sits immense around."

Thus, in *Spring*, Thomson had merely written

> "Whose aged oaks and venerable gloom
> Invite the noisy rooks;"

but his corrector alters and extends the passage into

> "Whose aged elms and venerable oaks
> Invite the rooks, who high amid the boughs
> In early spring their airy city build,
> And caw with ceaseless clamour."

Indeed, throughout *The Seasons* Thomson's indebtedness to his corrector is incalculable; many of the most felicitous touches are due to him. Now, who was this corrector? Let Mr. Tovey answer. "It has long been accepted as a fact among scholars that Pope assisted Thomson in the composition of *The Seasons*. Our original authority is, we suppose, Warton." The truth is that our original authority for this statement is neither Warton nor any other writer of the eighteenth century, but simply the conjecture of Mitford—in other words, Mitford's mere assumption that the handwriting of the corrector is the handwriting of Pope; and, if we are not mistaken, —for Mitford may have given earlier currency to it in some other place—the conjecture appeared for the first time in Mitford's edition of Gray, published in 1814. In his copy of the volume,

containing the MS. notes, he bolsters up his statement by two assertions and references: "That Pope saw some pieces of Thomson's in manuscript is clear from a letter in Bowles's *Supplement*, page 194" (an obvious misprint for 294). But on turning to the references all that we find is —it is in a letter dated February $173\frac{8}{9}$—"I have yet seen but three acts of Mr. Thomson's, but I am told, and believe by what I have seen that it excels in the pathetic"; the reference is plainly to Thomson's tragedy, *Edward and Eleonora.* Again, Mitford writes: "On Thomson's submitting his poems to Pope" (see Warton's edition, vol. viii., page 340), and again we get no proof. All that Pope says is, "I am just taken up"—he is writing to Aaron Hill under date November 1732—"by Mr. Thomson in the perusal of a new poem he has brought me;" this new poem being almost certainly *Liberty*, in the composition of which Thomson was then engaged. So far from the tradition having any countenance from Warton, it is as certain as anything can be, that Warton knew nothing about it. In his *Essay on Pope* he gives an elaborate account of *The Seasons*, and he has more than once referred to Pope and Thomson together; but he says not a word, either in this Essay or in his edition of Pope's Works, about Pope having corrected Thomson's poetry. If Pope assisted Thomson, to the extent indicated in these corrections, such an incident,

considering the fame of Thomson and the fame of Pope, must have been known to some at least of the innumerable editors, biographers, and anecdotists between 1742 and 1814. It could hardly have escaped being recorded by Murdoch, Mallet, or Warburton, by Ruffhead, by Savage or Spence, by Theophilus Cibber or Johnson. It is incredible that such an interesting secret should have been kept either by Thomson himself or by Pope. Again, whoever the corrector was, he had a fine ear for blank verse, and must indeed have been a master of it. There is no proof that Pope ever wrote in blank verse; indeed, we have the express testimony of Lady Wortley Montagu that he never attempted it, and his Shakespeare conclusively proves that he had anything but a nice ear for its rhythm. With all this collateral evidence against the probability of the corrector being Pope, we come to the evidence which should settle the question, the evidence of handwriting. There is no lack of material for forming an opinion on this point. Pope's autograph MSS. are abundant, illustrating his hand at every period in his life. It is amazing to find Mitford asserting that his friends Ellis and Combe, at the British Museum, had no doubt about the hand of the corrector being the hand of Pope. Mr. Tovey candidly admits that, "if the best authorities at the Museum many years ago were positive that the handwriting was Pope's, their successors

at the present time are equally positive that it is not." Such is the very decided opinion of Mr. Warner; such, also, as Mr. Tovey acknowledges, is the opinion of Professor Courthope, and such, we venture to think, will be the opinion of every one who will take the trouble to compare the hands. Mr. Tovey himself is plainly very uneasy, and indeed goes so far as to say that "it has all along been perplexing to me how the opinion that this was Pope's handwriting could ever have been *confidently*" (the italics are his) "entertained"; and yet in his notes he follows Bell, and inserts these corrections with Pope's initials.

We search in vain among those who are known to have been on friendly terms with Thomson for a probable claimant. It could not, as his other stupid revisions of Thomson's verses sufficiently show, have been Lyttleton. Mallet's blank verse is conclusive against his having had any hand in the corrections. Collins and Hammond are out of the question. It is just possible, though hardly likely, that the corrector was Armstrong. He was on very intimate terms with Thomson. His own poem proves that he could sometimes write excellent blank verse, but the touch and rhythm of the corrections are, it must be admitted, not the touch and rhythm of Armstrong.

What has long, therefore, been represented and circulated as an undisputed fact—namely,

that Pope assisted Thomson in the revision of *The Seasons*—rests not, as all Thomson's modern editors have supposed, on the traditions of the eighteenth century, and on the testimony of authenticated handwriting, but on a mere assumption of Mitford. That the volume in question really belonged to Thomson, and that the corrections are originals, hardly admits of doubt, though Mitford gives neither the pedigree nor the history of this most interesting literary relic. It is, of course, possible that the corrections are Thomson's own, and that the differences in the handwriting are attributable to the fact that in some cases he was his own scribe, that in others he employed an amanuensis; but the intrinsic unlikeness of the corrections, made in the strange hand, to his characteristic style renders this improbable. In any case there is nothing to warrant the assumption that the corrector was Pope.

CATULLUS AND LESBIA.[1]

PERHAPS the best thing in this world is youth, and the poetry of Catullus is its very incarnation. The "young Catullus" he was to his contemporaries, and the young Catullus he will be to the end of time. To turn over his pages is to recall the days when all within and all without conspire to make existence a perpetual feast, when life's lord is pleasure, its end enjoyment, its law impulse, before experience and satiety have disillusioned and disgusted, and we are still in Dante's phrase, "trattando l'ombre come cosa salda." And the poet of youth had the good fortune not to survive youth; of the dregs and lees of the life he chose he had no taste. While the cup which "but sparkles near the brim" was still sparkling for him, death dashed it from his lips. At thirty his tale was told,—and a radiant figure, a sunny memory and a golden volume were immortal.

[1] *The Lesbia of Catullus.* Arranged and translated by J. H. A. Tremenheere. London.

Revelling alike in the world of nature, and in the world of man, at once simple and intense, at once playful and pathetic, his poetry has a freshness as of the morning, an abandon as of a child at play. He has not, indeed, escaped the taint of Alexandrinism any more than Burns escaped the taint of the pseudo-classicism of the conventional school of his day, but this is the only note of falsetto discernible in what he has left us. It is when we compare him with Horace, Propertius, and Martial that his incomparable charm is most felt. As a lyric poet, except when patriotic, and when dealing with moral ideas, Horace is as commonplace as he is insincere; he had no passion; he had little pathos; he had not much sentiment; he had no real feeling for nature, he was little more than a consummate craftsman, to adopt an expression from Scaliger "ex alienis ingeniis poeta, ex suo tantum versificator." In his Greek models he found not merely his form, but his inspiration. Most of his love odes have all the appearance of being mere studies in fancy. When he attempts threnody he is as frigid as Cowley. Whose heart was ever touched by the verses to Virgil on the death of Quintilian, or by the verses to Valgius on the death of his son? The real Horace is the Horace of the Satires and Epistles, and the real Horace had as little of the temperament of a poet as La Fontaine and Prior. Propertius had passion, and he had certainly some feeling for nature, but he was an in-

curable pedant both in temper and in habit. Martial applied the epigram, in elegiacs and in hendecasyllabics, to the same purposes to which it was applied by Catullus, with more brilliance and finish, but he had not the power of informing trifles with emotion and soul. What became with Catullus the spontaneous expression of the dominant mood, became in the hands of Martial the mere *tour de force* of the ingenious wit. Catullus is the most Greek of all the Roman poets; Greek in the simplicity, chastity and propriety of his style, in his exquisite responsiveness to all that appeals to the senses and the emotions, in his ardent and abounding vitality. But, in his enthusiasm for nature, in the intensity of his domestic affections, and in his occasional touches of moral earnestness—and we have seldom to go far for them—he was Roman. His sketches from nature are delightful. What could be more perfect than the following? Has even Tennyson equalled it?—

> Hic, qualis flatu placidum mare matutino
> Horrificans Zephyrus proclivas incitat undas,
> Aurorâ exoriente, vagi sub lumina solis;
> Quæ tarde primum clementi flamine pulsæ
> Procedunt, leviterque sonant plangore cachinni:
> Post, vento crescente, magis magis increbescunt,
> Purpureâque procul nantes a luce refulgent.

"As in early morning when Zephyr's breath, ruffling the stilly sea, stirs it into slanting waves up against the glow of the travelling sun; and at first, while the impelling breeze is gentle, they move in slow procession, and the plash of their

ripples is not loud; but then, as the breeze freshens, they crowd faster and faster on, and far out at sea, as they float, flash back the splendour of the crimsoning day in their front."

Or, again, in the epistle to Manlius—

Qualis in aerii *pellucens* vertice montis
Rivus *muscoso prosilit* e *lapide.*

How vivid is the picture of the rising sun and of early morning in the Attis, 39–41.

Ubi oris aurei sol radiantibus oculis
Lustravit æthera album, sola dura, mare ferum,
Pepulitque noctis umbras vegetis sonipedibus.

In his "Asian Myrtle, in all the beauty of its blossom-laden branches, which the Wood-Nymphs feed with honey dew to be their toy:"—

Floridis velut enitens
Myrtus Asia ramulis,
Quos Hamadryades Deæ
Ludicrum sibi roscido
Nutriunt humore.—

—who does not recognise Matthew Arnold's "natural magic"?

Flowers he loved, as Shakespeare loved them. What tenderness there is in the image of the love that perished—

Prati
Ultimi flos, prætereunte postquam
Tactus aratro est,
(xi. 19–21.)

—in the beautiful simile, so often imitated in

every language in Europe, where the unmarried maiden is compared to the uncropped flower, lxii., 39–45; or where in the

> Alba parthenice,
> Luteumve papaver,
> (lxi. 194–5.)

he sees the symbol of maidenhood; or where Ariadne is compared to the myrtles on the banks of the Eurotas, and to the "flowers of diverse hues which the spring breezes evoke"; and, again, the exquisite simile picturing the husband's love binding fast the bride's thoughts, as a tree is entwined in the clinging clasp of the gadding ivy—

> Mentem amore revinciens,
> Ut tenax hedera huc et huc
> Arborem implicat errans.

Then we have the garland of Priapus with its felicitous epithets (xix., xx.).

It may be said of Catullus as Shelley said of his Alastor—

> Every sight
> And sound from the vast earth and ambient air
> Sent to his heart their choicest impulses.

What rapture inspires and informs the lines to his yacht, and to Sirmio, as well as the *Jam ver egelidos refert tepores!*

As the author of the *Attis* Catullus stands alone among poets. There was, so far as we know, nothing like it before, and there has been

nothing like it since. If it be a study from the Greek, as it is generally supposed to be, it is very difficult to conjecture at what period its original could have been produced. There is nothing at all resembling it which has come down from the lyric period; its theme is not one which would have been likely to attract the Attic poets. If its model was the work of some Alexandrian, we can only say that such a poem must have been an even greater anomaly in that literature than Smart's *Song to David* is to our own literature, in the eighteenth century. It may, of course, be urged that it is equally anomalous in Latin poetry, and that, if resolved into its elements, it has much more affinity with what may be traced to Greek than to Roman sources. In its compound epithets, and more particularly in the singular use of "foro," so plainly substituted for the Greek *ἀγορὰ* and its associations, it certainly reads like a translation from the Greek; and yet, in the total impression made by it, the poem has not the air of a translation, but of an original, and of an original struck out, in inspiration, at white heat.

Only by an extraordinary effort of imaginative sympathy are we now able to realize to ourselves the tragedy of the *Attis*, while its rushing galliambics whirl us through the panorama of its swift-succeeding pictures. But home to every heart must come the poems which Catullus dedicates to the memory of his brother, and the poem in

which he tries to soothe Calvus for the death of Quintilia.

Multas per gentes, et multa per aequora vectus
  Advenio has miseras, frater, ad inferias,
Ut te postremo donarem munere mortis,
  Et mutum nequidquam alloquerer cinerem:
Quandoquidem fortuna mihi tete abstulit ipsum:
  Heu miser indigne frater adempte mihi!
Nunc tamen interea prisco quæ more parentum
  Tradita sunt tristi munere ad inferias,
Accipe, fraterno multum manantia fletu:
  Atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale.

"Many are the peoples, many the seas I have passed through to be here, dear brother, at this, thine untimely grave, that I might pay thee death's last tribute, and greet,—how vainly,—the dust that has no response. For well I know Fortune hath bereft me of thy living self—Ah! hapless brother, cruelly torn from me! Yet here, see, be the offerings which, from of old, the custom of our fathers hath handed down as a sad oblation to the grave—take them—they are streaming with a brother's tears. And now—for evermore—brother, hail and farewell!"

Could pathos go further? How exquisite, too, is the following:—

Si quidquam mutis gratum acceptumque sepulcris
  Accidere a nostro, Calve, dolore potest,
Quum desiderio veteres renovamus amores,
  Atque olim amissas flemus amicitias:
Certe non tanto mors immatura dolori est
  Quintiliæ, quantum gaudet amore tuo.[1]

[1] "If the silent dead can feel any pleasure, or solace from our sorrow, Calvus, when, in wistful regret, we recall past loves, and weep for the friendships severed long ago, then be sure that Quintilia's grief for her early death is not so great as the joy she feels in knowing your love for her."

Shakespeare merely unfolded what was included here, when he wrote those haunting lines :—

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long-since cancell'd woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight.

Never, too, has any poet given such pathetic expression to a sorrow, which to the young is even harder to bear than the loss inflicted by death, the perfidy and treachery of friends. The verses to Alphenus (xxx.), to the anonymous friend in lxviii., and the epigram to Rufus (lxxvii.), are indescribably touching. What infinite sadness there is in :—

Si tu oblitus es, at Dii meminerunt, meminit Fides,
Quæ te ut pæniteat postmodo facti faciet tui.

What passion of grief in :—

Heu, heu, nostræ crudele venenum
Vitæ, heu, heu, nostræ pestis amicitiæ!

But nothing that Catullus has left us equals in fascinating interest, or exceeds in charm, the poems inspired by the woman who was at once the bliss and the curse of his life —

Lesbia nostra, Lesbia illa,
Illa Lesbia, quam Catullus unam
Plusquam se, atque suos amavit omnes.

Whether she is to be identified with the sister of P. Clodius Pulcher, and the wife of Metellus Celer, seems to us, in spite of the arguments of Schwaber, Munro, Ellis, and Sellar, extremely doubtful. It is a point which need not be discussed here, and is, indeed, of little importance. That she was a woman of superb and commanding beauty, a false wife, a false mistress, and of immeasurable profligacy, Catullus has himself told us. There could only be one end to a passion of which such a siren was the object; and, exquisite as the poems are which precede the breaking of the spell, it is in the poems recording the gradual process of disenchantment, and the struggle between the old love and the new loathing, that Catullus touches us most. How piercing is the pathos of such a poem as the *Si qua recordanti* (lxxvi.), or the epigram in which he says that he loves and loathes, but knows not why, only knows that it is so, and that he is on the rack:—

> Odi et amo. Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.
> Nescio: sed fieri sentio et excrucior.

Or where he says that, pest as she is, he cannot curse a love who is dearer tō him than both his eyes:—

> Credis me potuisse meæ maledicere vitæ,
> Ambobus mihi quæ carior est oculis?
> Non potui, nec, si possem, tam perdite amarem.

And he suffered the more, as he had lavished on her the purest affections of his heart. His

love for her—such was his own expression—was not simply that which men ordinarily feel for their mistresses, but such as the father feels for his sons and his sons-in-law :—

Dilexi tum te, non tantum ut vulgus amicam,
  Sed pater ut gnatos diligit et generos.

But shameless as she is, and it is an impossibility for her to be otherwise, he cannot abandon her. Do what she will he is her slave. His mind, he says, was so straitened by her frailty, so beggared by its own devotion, that, even if she became virtuous, he could not love her with absolute goodwill, and if she stuck at nothing—drained vice to its very dregs—he could not give her up :—

Huc est mens deducta tuâ, mea Lesbia, culpâ
  Atque ita se officio perdidit ipsa suo,
Ut jam nec bene velle queam tibi, si optima fias,
  Nec desistere amare, omnia si facias.

He compares himself to a man labouring under a cruel and incurable disease, a disease which is paralysing his energy, and draining life of its joy :—

Me miserum adspicite, et si vitam puriter egi,
  Eripite hanc pestem perniciemque mihi,
Quæ mihi subrepens imos, ut torpor, in artus
  Expulit ex omni pectore lætitias.

Nearly sixteen hundred years had to pass before the world was to have any parallel to these poems. And the parallel is certainly a remark-

able one. In the "Dark Lady" of Shakespeare's Sonnets, Lesbia lives again; in the lover of the dark lady, Lesbia's victim. Once more a false wife and a false mistress, not indeed beautiful, but with powers of fascination so irresistible that deformity itself becomes a charm, makes havoc of a poet's peace. Once more a passion, as degraded as it is degrading, sows feuds among friends, and "infects with jealousy the sweetness of affiance." Once more rises the bitter cry of a soul, conscious of the unspeakable degradation of a thraldom which it is agony to endure, and from which it would be agony to be emancipated. Compare for instance:—

> My love is as a fever, longing still
> For that which longer nurseth the disease,
> Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
> The uncertain sickly appetite to please.
> . . . . . .
> Past cure I am, now reason is past care,
> And frantic mad with evermore unrest,
> My thoughts and my discourse as madman's are,
> (Sonnet cxlvii.)

with Catullus, lxxvi.

And:—

> Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,
> That in the very refuse of thy deeds
> There is such strength and warrantise of skill,
> That in my mind thy worst all best exceeds.
> Who taught thee how to make me love thee more,
> The more I hear and see just cause of hate?
> (Sonnet cl.)

with Catullus, lxxii., lxxiii., lxxv.; while Sonnet

cxxxvii. presents a ghastly parallel with Catullus, lviii. Again, how exactly analogous is the ad juration to Quintius in Epigram lxxxii., with what finds expression in Sonnets xl.–xlii., and Sonnet cxx. But it would be tedious as well as superfluous to cite particular parallels where the whole position—which may be summed up in the two words of Catullus, "Odi et amo," —is identical.

Not the least remarkable thing about Catullus is his range and his versatility. It is truly extraordinary that the same pen should have given us such finished social portraits as "Suffenus iste" (xxii.), "Ad Furium" (xxiii.), "In Egnatium" (xxxix.); the perfection of such serious fooling as we find in the "Lugete, O Veneres" (iii.), and, if we may apply such an expression to the most delicious love poem ever written, the "Acme and Septimius" (xlv.); of such humorous fooling as we find in the "Varus me meus ad suos amores" (x.), the "O Colonia quæ cupis" (xvii.), the "Adeste, hendecasyllabi," the "Oramus, si forte non molestum" (lv.); such epic as we have in the "Peleus and Thetis"; such triumphs of richness, splendour, and grace as we have in the three marriage poems; such a superb expression of the highest imaginative power, penetrated with passion and enthusiasm, as we have in the *Attis*; such concentrated invective and satire as mark some of the lampoons; such mock heroic as we have in the *Coma Berenices*;

such piercing pathos as penetrates the autobiographical poems, and the poems dedicated to Lesbia.

Catullus has been compared to Keats, but the comparison is not a happy one. His nearest analogy among modern poets is Burns. Both were, in Tennyson's phrase, "dowered with the love of love, the scorn of scorn," and, in the poems of both, those passions find the intensest expression. Both had an exquisite sympathy with all that appeals, either in nature or in humanity, to the senses and the affections. Both were sensualists and libertines without being effeminate, or without being either depraved or hardened. In both, indeed, an infinite tenderness is perhaps the predominating feature. Both had humour, that of Catullus being the more caustic, that of Burns the more genial. Both were distinguished by sincerity and simplicity; both waged war with charlatanry and baseness. Burns had the richer nature and was the greater as a man; Catullus was the more accomplished artist.

But it is time to turn to the book which has recalled Catullus and Lesbia. Mr. Tremenheere has, with great ingenuity, succeeded in concocting by a process of elaborate dovetailing a very pretty romance which he divides into nine chapters, the first being "The Birth of Love," the second, third and fourth, "Possession," "Quarrels" and "Reconciliation," the fifth, sixth,

and seventh, "Doubt," "A Brother's Death" and "Unfaithfulness," the last two, "Avoidance" and "The Death of Love." The chief objection to this is that it is for the most part fanciful, and is absolutely without warrant, either from tradition or from probability. Many of the poems pressed into the service of his narrative by Mr. Tremenheere have nothing whatever to do with Lesbia. Such would be xiii., "The invitation to Fabullus," xiv., "The Acme and Septimius."

The translations are very unequal. Of many of them it may be said in Dogberry's phrase that they "are tolerable and not to be endured," or to borrow an expression from Byron "so middling bad were better." Thus the powerful poem to Gellius (xci.) is attenuated into :—

> 'Twas not that I esteem'd you were
> As constant or incapable
> Of vulgar baseness, but that she
> For whom great love was wasting me,
> The spice of incest lacked for you;
> And though we were old friends, 'tis true,
> That seem'd poor cause to my poor mind,
> Not so to yours.

Sometimes the versions are detestable. Nothing could be worse than to turn :—

> Nulli illum pueri nullæ optavere puellæ

> No more is she glad to the eyes of a lad,
> To the lasses a pride,—

or

> Dulcis pueri ebrios ocellos

as

> Her minion's passion-sodden eyes,—

which might do very well for a coarse phrase like "In Venerem putres," but not for "Ebrios." But sometimes the renderings are very felicitous. As here:—

> Quid vis? quâlubet esse notus optas
> Eris: quandoquidem meos amores
> Cum longâ voluisti amare pœnâ.
>
> Cost what it may, you'll win renown!
> You shall, such longing you exhibit
> Both for my mistress—and a gibbet!

And the following is happy:—

> Nullum amans vere, sed identidem omnium
> Ilia rumpens.
> Nec meum respectet, ut ante, amorem
> Qui illius culpâ cecidit; velut prati
> Ultimi flos, prætereunte postquam
> Tactus aratro est.
>
> Ah, shameless, loveless lust, sweet, seek no more
> To win love back, by thine own fault it fell,
> In the far corner of the field though hid,
> Touch'd by the plough at last,—the flower is dead.

The following also is neat and skilful, but how inferior to the almost terrible impressiveness of the original:—

> O Di si vostrûm est misereri, aut si quibus unquam
> Extremâ jam ipsâ in morte tulistis opem.
> Me miserum adspicite, et si vitam puriter egi,
> Eripite hanc pestem perniciemque mihi,
> Quæ mihi subrepens imos, ut torpor, in artus
> Expulit ex omni pectore lætitias.

Oh God! if Thine be pity, and if Thou
E'en in the jaws of death ere now,
Hast wrought salvation—look on me;
And if my life seem fair to Thee
O tear this plague, this curse away,
Which gaining on me day by day,
A creeping slow paralysis,
Hath driven away all happiness.

Six love stories stand out conspicuous in the records of poetry—those which find expression in the *Elegies* of Propertius, in the *Sonnets and Canzoni* of Dante and Petrarch, in the *Sonnets* of Camoens, in the *Astrophel and Stella* of Sidney, in the *Sonnets* of Shakespeare. But never has passion, never has pathos, thrilled in intenser or more piercing utterance than in the poems which that fatal "Clytemnestra quadrantaria" —to employ the phrase which may actually have been applied to her—inspired, and in which the rapture and loathing and despair of Catullus found a voice.

THE RELIGION OF SHAKESPEARE[1]

THIS book, which is partly a compilation from the uncollected writings of the late Richard Simpson and partly the composition of Father Bowden himself, is an attempt to show that Shakespeare was a Roman Catholic. It contains much interesting information; it is well written, and we have read it with pleasure. With much which we find in it we entirely concur and are in full sympathy. We take Shakespeare quite as seriously as Father Bowden does. We believe that the greatest of dramatic poets is also one of the greatest of moral teachers, that his theology and ethics deserve the most careful study, and that they have, too frequently, been either neglected or misinterpreted. We agree with Father Bowden that nothing could be sounder and more persistently emphasised than the ethical element in this poet's dramas; that his ethics are, in the

[1] *The Religion of Shakespeare.* Chiefly from the writings of the late Mr. Richard Simpson. By Henry Sebastian Bowden. London.

main, the ethics of Christianity, and that so far from Shakespeare being simply an agnostic and having no religion at all, as Birch and others have contended, he is, if not formally, at least in essence, as religious as Æschylus and Sophocles.

And now Father Bowden must forgive us if we are unable to go further with him. We have no prejudice against Roman Catholicism, or against any of the creeds in which religious faith and reverence have found expression,—"Tros Rutulusve fuat nullo discrimine agetur." Our sole wish is, if possible, to get at the truth. It is of comparatively little consequence now to what form of religion Shakespeare belonged, but it would be at least interesting, if it could be shown that any particular sect could legitimately claim him.

In discussing this question we must bear in mind that in Shakespeare's time, as in the time of the ancients, religion had two aspects, its private and its public. In its public aspect it was a part of the machinery of the state, an essential portion of the political fabric. Till the Reformation there had been practically no schism and no difficulty. After the Reformation a most perplexing problem presented itself. Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, in a long and terrible conflict, struggled for the mastery. At the accession of Elizabeth the victory had been won, so far as England was concerned, by Protestantism, and Protestantism

was the accepted religion of the nation. As such, it was the duty of every loyal citizen to uphold it; it became with the throne one of the two pillars on which the fabric of the state rested. Roman Catholicism became identified with the political rivals and enemies of England. Protestantism became identified with her lovers and upholders. Thus the Church and the Throne became indissoluble, at once the symbols, centres, and securities of political harmony and union. This accounts for the attitude of Hooker, Spenser, Shakespeare and Bacon towards Episcopalian Protestantism on the one hand, and towards Puritanism on the other. About Shakespeare's political opinions there can be no doubt at all, for, if we except the Comedies, he preaches them emphatically in almost every drama which he has left us. They were those of an uncompromising and intolerant Royalist, in whose eyes the only security for all that is dear to the patriot lay in implicit obedience to the will of the sovereign, and in upholding a system to which that will was law. That he should, therefore, have had any sympathy with the Roman Catholics is, on *a priori* grounds, exceedingly improbable. We turn to his Dramas, and what do we find? It would be no exaggeration to say, that there is not a line in them which indicates that he regarded the Roman Catholics with favour. On the contrary, they abound in points directed

against them. Thus he twice goes out of his way, once in *Henry V.*[1] and once in *All's Well that Ends Well*, to observe that "miracles have ceased." There is a bitter sneer at them in the reference to the sanctimonious pirate and the commandments, in *Measure for Measure.*[2] There can be little doubt that the words in the porter's speech in *Macbeth*, "here's an equivocator that could swear in both the scales against either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to Heaven," have sarcastic reference to the doctrine of equivocation avowed by Garnett and popularly associated with the Jesuits; while the remark about the fitness of "the nun's lip to the friar's mouth"[3] in *All's Well that Ends Well* is another concession to Protestant prejudice.

In *King John* such a speech as the following may be dramatic, but who can doubt that it expressed the poet's own sentiments?—

> Tell him this tale; and from the mouth of England
> Add thus much more,—that no Italian priest
> Shall tithe or toll in our dominions;
> But, as we under Heaven are supreme head,
> So, under Him, that great supremacy,

---

[1] Act I. Sc. i. This is a very pointed reference, but in the second instance, in *All's Well that Ends Well*, Act II. Sc. i., "They say miracles are past," he gives a turn to the expression which converts it into a rebuke of Rationalism.

[2] Act I. Sc. ii.

[3] Act II. Sc. ii.

Where we do reign, we will alone uphold,
Without the assistance of a mortal hand:
So tell the Pope; all reverence set apart
To him, and his usurp'd authority.

King John is, indeed, simply the manifesto of Protestantism against papal aggression. What could be more contemptible than the character of Pandulph and the part which he plays? Is it credible that Shakespeare could have had any sympathy with a religion whose minister is one whom he represents as saying:

Meritorious shall that hand be called,
Canonized, and worshipped as a saint,
That takes away by any secret course
Thy hateful life.

In *Henry VIII.*, again, we have an elaborate eulogy of the Reformation, Cranmer being presented in the most favourable light, Gardiner in the most unfavourable, while Wolsey is almost as detestable as Pandulph.

It is really pitiable to see the shifts to which the authors of this book are reduced to make out their theory. They have even pressed into its service Jordan's palpable and long-exploded forgery of John Shakespeare's Will, and the fact that John Shakespeare's name is found on a list of Recusants, when it is, in that very list, expressly stated that he had absented himself from church, simply from fear of process for debt. Passages in the dramas are similarly perverted. Shakespeare's hostility to the Pro-

testants induced him, we are told, to pour contempt on Oldcastle by depicting him as Falstaff. His delineation of Malvolio, and his frequent sneers at the Puritans, are attributed to the same motive. The famous lines in *Hamlet*, placed in the mouth of the Ghost, are cited to prove his belief in purgatory; the comical penances imposed on Biron and his friends in *Love's Labour Lost* to prove his belief in penance. When in *Lear* it is said of Cordelia that:—

> She shook
> The holy water from her heavenly eyes.

we are to see another indication of Shakespeare's religion as "they have a Catholic ring about them." Sentiments which are common to all sects of Christians are regarded as peculiar to Roman Catholicism; mere dramatic utterances are forced into illustrations of supposed personal convictions. What is habitually and systematically ignored is, that Shakespeare, being a dramatic poet, must necessarily make his characters express themselves dramatically, and that, as he was depicting times preceding the Reformation, his sentiments and expressions very naturally took the colour of the world in which his characters moved. The wonder is not that this should have occurred, but that Shakespeare should, in spite of the gross anachronism of such a process, have so *Protestantized* pre-Reformation times. We are quite willing to

concede to Father Bowden that there is enough to warrant us in assuming that Shakespeare did not regard the Puritans with favour. But his dislike to them arose not from the fact that they were Protestants, but that they were not orthodox Protestants. He was opposed to them for the same reasons that Elizabeth and James, Hooker and Bacon were opposed to them. Their hostility to his profession, their sanctimonious cant, and the surly asceticism of their lives, no doubt contributed to his prejudice against them.

Nor are we in any way justified in concluding that Shakespeare accepted the teaching of the Church of Rome in spiritual matters. Nothing could be more unwarranted than what is assumed by Father Bowden in the following passage. He is speaking of Shakespeare's attitude in relation to death. "'Ripeness is all'; and he shows us in all his penitents how that ripeness is secured, sin forgiven, and heaven won on the lines of Catholic dogma and by the Sacraments of the Church."

What are the facts? Shakespeare's reticence about a future state, and what may await man, in the form of reward and punishment hereafter, is one of his most striking characteristics. Neither Cordelia nor Desdemona, neither Constance nor Imogen in their darkest hours expresses any confidence in the final mercy and justice of Heaven. Othello, falling by a fate as

terrible as it was undeserved, dies without a syllable of hope. "The rest is silence" are the ominous words with which Hamlet takes leave of life. When Gloucester believes himself to be standing on the brink of death, in the farewell which he takes of the world he has no anticipation of any other; all he contemplates is "to shake patiently his great affliction off." So die Lear, Hotspur, Romeo, Antony, Eros, Enobarbus, Macbeth, Beaufort, Mercutio, Laertes. So die Brutus, Coriolanus, King John. In the Duke's speech in *Measure for Measure*, where he is preparing Claudio to meet death, death is merely contemplated as an escape from the pains and discomforts of life. Macbeth would 'jump' the world to come if he could escape punishment in this. Prospero suggests no hope of any waking from the "rounding sleep." Even Isabella, dedicated as she was to religion, in fortifying Claudio against his fate draws no weapon from the armoury of faith. It is just the same in the dirge in Cymbeline, in the soliloquy of Posthumus, in the consolations addressed by the gaoler to Posthumus.[1]

[1] In opposition to these may, it is true, be cited Othello's words to Desdemona—*Othello*, V. 2: the Duke's remark about putting the unrepentant Barnardine to death—*Measure for Measure*, IV. 3: the dying speeches of Buckingham and Catharine in *Henry VIII.*, II. 1; IV. 2: Laertes on Ophelia, —*Hamlet*, V. 1. But these passages, and others like them, cannot be cited as evidence to the contrary; they are merely dramatic utterances.

The last passage is perhaps more remarkable than any, because it shows the utter ambiguity of the directest expression which the poet has left on the subject.

Gaol.—Look you, sir, you know not which way you go.
Post.—Yes, indeed do I, fellow.
Gaol.—Your death has eyes in 's head then; I have not seen him so pictured: you must either be directed by some that take upon them to know, or take upon yourself, that which I am sure you do not know; or jump the after inquiry on your own peril; and how you shall speed in your journey's end, I think you'll never return to tell one.
Post.—I tell thee, fellow, *there are none want eyes to direct them the way I am going, but such as wink, and will not use them.*

Cymbeline, V. 4.

Shakespeare, in truth, never attempts to lift the veil which for living man can be raised only by Revelation. The silence of his philosophy,—for we must not confound occasional sentiments and mere dramatic utterances with what justifies us in deducing that philosophy,—in relation to a life after this, is unbroken. It is, indeed, remarkable that he represents such speculations,—the dwelling on such problems,—as more likely to disturb, perplex, and hamper us, than to give us any comfort. As Hamlet puts it in the well-known lines :—

The native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

Did he believe in the immortality of the soul and in a future state? Who can say? What we can say is, that if we require affirmative evidence of such a faith, we shall seek for it in vain. In the Sonnets, where he seems to speak from himself, the only immortality to which he refers is the permanence of the impression which his genius as a poet will leave—immortality in the sense in which Cicero and Tacitus have so eloquently interpreted the term. But on the other hand, if there is nothing to warrant a conclusion in the affirmative, there is nothing to warrant one in the negative. His attitude is precisely that of Aristotle in the *Ethics*; a life beyond this is neither affirmed nor denied, but the scale of probability inclines towards the negative, and his moral philosophy proceeds on the assumption that life is the end of life.[1]

Goethe has said that man was not born to solve the problems of the universe, but to attempt to solve them, that he might keep within the limits of the knowable. And it is within the limits of the knowable that Shakespeare's theology confines itself. Starting simply, as Gervinus says, from the point, that man is born with powers and faculties which he is to use, and with powers of self-regulation and self-determination which are to direct aright the powers of action, the "Whence we are," and

[1] Cf. *Ethics*, I. x. 11, and III. vi. 6.

the "Whither we are going," are problems for which he has no solution.[1]

> Men must endure
> Their going hence e'en as their coming hither:
> Ripeness is all.

And for ripeness or unripeness, man's will is responsible. He would probably have agreed with the saying of Heraclitus, *ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων.* Throughout his Dramas all is explicable, with the single exception of Macbeth, without reference to supernaturalism. Perfectly intelligible effects follow perfectly intelligible causes; the moral law solves all. But especially conspicuous is the absence of the theological element where we should especially have looked for it. "Men and women," says Brewer, "are made to drain the cup of misery to the dregs; but, as from the depths into which they have fallen, by their own weakness, or by the weakness of others, the poet never raises them, in violation of the inexorable laws of nature, so neither does he put a new song in their mouths, or any expression of confidence in God's righteous dealing. With as hard and precise a hand as Bacon does he sunder the celestial from the terrestrial kingdom, the things of earth from the things of heaven."[2]

His theology, indeed, in its application to life, seems to resolve itself into the recognition of

[1] *Shakespeare Commentaries*, Vol. II. 620–1.

[2] Article on Shakespeare, *Quarterly Review* for July, 1871, p. 46.

universal law, divinely appointed, immutable, inexorable, ubiquitous, controlling the physical world, controlling the moral world, vindicating itself in the smallest facts of life, and in the most stupendous convulsions of nature and society. In morals it is maintained by the observance of the mean on the one hand, and the due fulfilment of duty and obligation on the other. In politics it is maintained by the subordination of the individual to the state, and of the state to the higher law. Hooker says of Law, that as her voice is the harmony of the world, so her seat is the bosom of God. The Law Shakespeare recognises; of the Law-giver he is silent. As he is dumb before the mystery of death, so is he equally reticent in the face of that other mystery. He has nothing of the anthropomorphism of the Old Testament, of the Homeric poems, and of Milton. Nor has he ever expressed himself as Goethe has done in the famous passage in *Faust*, beginning: "Wer darf ihn nennen." In two important respects he seems to differ from the Christian conception. He represents no miraculous interpositions of Providence, no suspension of natural laws in favour of the righteous, and to the detriment of the wicked. He is too reverend to say with Goethe, that man, so far as direction in action goes, is practically his own divinity. But he does say and represent—and that repeatedly—what is expressed in such passages as these:—

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie
Which we ascribe to Heaven: the fated sky
Gives us full scope.

All's Well that Ends Well.

Men at some time are masters of their fate.

Julius Cæsar.

Omission to do what is necessary
Seals a commission to a blank of danger.

Troilus and Cressida.

And we have no right to expect that Providence will cancel it. If deeds do not go with prayer, prayer is not likely to be of much avail. So the Bishop of Carlisle in *Richard II.*:—

The means that Heaven yields must be embrac'd
And not neglected; else if Heaven would
And we will not, Heav'n's offer we refuse:—

while the words which he puts into the mouth of Leonine in *Pericles* are, we feel, significant:—

Pray: but be not tedious,
For the Gods are quick of ear, and I am sworn
To do my work with haste.

He has no sympathy with pious recluses. He has depicted no saint or religious enthusiast, or written a line to indicate that he had any respect for their ideals. With him,—

Spirits are not finely touched
But to fine issues.

They say best men are moulded out of faults,
And, for the most, become much more the better
For being a little bad.

Most subject is the fattest soil to weeds

are typical axioms in his philosophy of life. And the nearest approaches he has given us to the saintly type of character are the sentimental pietists, Henry VI. and Richard II., both of whom are failures, and border closely on moral imbecility. On the spiritual and moral efficacy of faith, he has nowhere laid stress. In his innumerable reflections on life and man, in his maxims and precepts, there is, as a rule, scarcely any flavour of Christian theology. They are just such as might be expected from a pure rationalist. Such is the philosophy of Hamlet, of Jacques, of the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, and of Prospero. Even Friar Laurence, though an ecclesiastic, reasons and advises just as a Stoic philosopher might have done. The friars in *Much Ado about Nothing*, and in *Measure for Measure*, the Bishop of Carlisle in *Richard II.*, and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in *Henry IV.* and *Henry V.*, and Cardinal Beaufort in *Henry VI.*, act and speak like mere men of the world. A bulky volume would scarcely sum up the ethical and political reflections scattered up and down his plays; a few pages would comprise all that could be put down as exclusively theological. This complete subordination of the theological element to the ethical is the more conspicuous when we compare his dramas with the Homeric Epics, and with the tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles.

And yet if a thoughtful person, after going

attentively through the thirty-six plays, were asked what the prevailing impression made on him was, he would probably reply the profound reverence which Shakespeare shows universally for religion—his deep sense of the mysterious relation which exists between God and man. We feel that his silence on transcendental subjects springs not from indifference, but from awe. The remarkable words which he places in the mouth of Lafeu, in *All's Well that Ends Well* (Act II. 3), merely sum up what we hear *sotto voce* in various forms of expression throughout his dramas; "we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence it is that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear." And the same reverence and humility find a voice in the verses in which, in all probability, he took leave of the world of active life.

> Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
> And what strength I have's mine own,
> Which is most faint.
> . . . . Now I want
> Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
> And my ending is despair
> Unless I be relieved by prayer,
> Which pierces so that it assaults
> Mercy itself, and frees all faults.

No poet has dwelt more on the duty and moral efficacy of prayer, on the omnipresence of God,

and on the fact that in conscience we have a Divine monitor.

Of the respect which Shakespeare entertained for Christianity as a creed, of his conviction of its competency to fulfil and satisfy all the ends of religion in men of the highest type of intelligence and ability, we require no further proof than his Henry V. Henry V. is undoubtedly his ideal man, as Theseus in the *Œdipus Coloneus* is the ideal man of Sophocles. And Henry V. is pre-eminently a Christian. Wherever Shakespeare refers to the person and to the teachings of Christ, it is always with peculiar tenderness and solemnity. His ethics are in one respect essentially Christian, and that is in their emphatic insistence on the virtues of mercy and forgiveness of injuries. In *Measure for Measure*, he stretched the first as far as the Master Himself stretched it, at the eleventh hour, to the penitent thief. And in the *Tempest*, that play which seems to embody in allegory Shakespeare's mature and final philosophy of life, who does not recognise the symbol of Him who rules, not merely in justice and righteousness, but in benevolence and mercy, when Prospero, with sinners and traitors and foes in his power, proclaims—

> The rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further.

He struck this note in one of the earliest of his plays :—

> Who by repentance is not satisfied,
> Is nor of heaven, nor earth : for these are pleas'd.
> By penitence th' Eternal's wrath's appeas'd.[1]

and the note vibrates through his works. It is the crowning moral of *Measure for Measure* ; it is one of the dominant notes in *Cymbeline*. He also reflects Christianity in the beautiful optimism which discerns in evil the agent of good, and in calamity and sorrow the benevolence and mercy of God. This is the philosophy which penetrates what were probably his last three dramas, *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Tempest*.

In these respects, then, it may fairly be maintained that Shakespeare is Christian. For the rest his dramas might, so far as their philosophy is concerned, have come down to us from classical antiquity. Nothing can be more Greek than the main basis on which his ethics rest—the observance of the mean, and the recognition of the relation of virtue to the becoming. When Claudio says :—

> As surfeit is the father of much fast,
> So every scope by the immoderate use
> Turns to restraint ;

[1] *Two Gentlemen of Verona:* V. 4.

when Norfolk says :—

> The fire that mounts the liquor till 't o'erflow
> In seeming to augment it wastes it;

when Friar Laurence tells us that :—

> Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,
> And vice sometime 's by action dignified;

and Portia that

> There is no good without respect,

we have not only the keys to his ethics but the texts for sermons which find living illustrations in the fall of Angelo, of Coriolanus, of Timon, and of many others of his protagonists. Thus do his ethics temper and readjust for the sphere of working life, those of the Divine Enthusiast who legislated, in some respects, too exclusively perhaps, for a kingdom which is not of this world.

And so, his 'religion' being, to borrow an expression of his own, "as broad and general as the casing air," it has come to pass, that Shakespeare has been claimed as an orthodox Protestant by Knight, Bishop Wordsworth, and Trench; as an orthodox Roman Catholic by M. Rio, Mr. Simpson, and Father Bowden; and as a simple agnostic by Gervinus, Kreysig, and Professor Caird.

"He hath," says Sir Thomas Browne speaking of himself, "one common and authentic philosophy which he learnt in the schools, whereby he

reasons and satisfies the reason of other men: another more reserved and drawn from experience whereby he satisfies his own." It may be, it may quite well be, for he has left nothing to justify conclusion to the contrary, that the words of Shakespeare's Will — mere formula though they be—are the expression of what he "reserved" to satisfy himself, and that he accepted the Christian Revelation. It may be, that what we are *certainly* warranted in concluding about him, represents all that can be concluded, namely, that:—

> He at least believed in soul, was very sure of God.

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Butler & Tanner, The Selwood Printing Works, Frome, and London.